



Yule Y.R. XLVI
January 30, 2009 c.e.
Volume 25 Issue 1

Founded Summer Solstice, Y.R. XLVI

Formatted for double-sided printing.

Digitally stored on bio-degradable recyclable electrons! It is a carbon-neutral publication.

A temporary publication until A Druid Missal-Any magazine resumes.

For Submissions: Send to mikerdna@hotmail.com

Editor's Notes

There were some serious contenders from the RDNA for the DANAC Golden Oak Awards in 2008, and I was quite impressed by the other competition on very short notice. Hopefully with more notice, the 2009 contest should be quite vigorous, and I hope you will contribute.

Not many News of The Groves this issue, come on folks, lets share those odd bits of information that make you so special and interesting out there!

I'm starting to post more articles in 2008 about grove dynamics and making them work. Consider them suggestions or possibilities, and see if they work well or not for your local situation.



Table of Contents

- Editor's Notes and Table of Contents 1
- News of the Groves 2
- News from the Web 2
- 2008 Golden Oak Award Winners 3
- Druids Who Were Also Women 9
- On Raising Children – Three Triads 14
- Weeding the Garden 17
- Celtic Reconstructionism (Wikipedia article) 28
- Bardic Corner: Candle Songs (Candle in the Wind) 34
- Quote Corner: Community and Change 35
- Bard in Review: John Denver 38
- News: Druid Wars in Britain 40
- News: Playing Games for Singles 42
- Media Corner: Sex and the Celts 43
- Publishing Information 45

News of the Groves

Submit your RDNA grove or protogrove news 2 weeks before the eight Druid festivals to mikerdna@hotmail.com
Check your grove listing data at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/wheretroves.html>

Carleton Grove: News from Minnesota.

Mike talked with Archdruid Daniel over at Carleton. There will be a period of temporary stewardship, while Daniel is off in New Hampshire, but folks are still invited to visit Carleton if you're in the area. They currently have a core of about 6 people and various visitors from 3 to 10 sometimes. They are paying more attention to environmental issues. They are also considering joining an interfaith college council

Mango Mission: News from South-East Asia

I had a baby daughter and that pretty much kept me busy in Bangkok for two months. I also saw to conclusion the DANAC Golden Oak Awards, which was a fine collaborative effort from member of six groups.

White Rabbit Grove: News from Wisconsin

Helga has a blog <http://helgaleena.mylivepage.com/blog/141/1351/What%20is%20ahead%20for%202009?>

News from the Web

Courtesy of Google Alerts
What's the internet saying about Reformed Druidism?
October 2008 to Feb 2009

“On the larger question of sectarian prayer at governmental functions or events, i disagree with precedent. instead of limiting speakers to offering generic prayers without sectarian sentiment, we should instead let speakers use their own specific traditions intact, but have a completely open-door policy to all varieties of religion. and i would like to volunteer myself to give the invocation on behalf of the **reformed non-aristotelian druids of north america (RNA-DNA)**, and look forward to seeing snake handlers and glossolalia and the full spectrum of american religious freedom on display for all to admire.”

Download ARDA 2 part 0 at [http://www.docstoc.com/search/Special-Lease-\(Lake-Clifton\)-Act-1916---00-a0-07/](http://www.docstoc.com/search/Special-Lease-(Lake-Clifton)-Act-1916---00-a0-07/)

Original Arda edition in one download, at <http://rapidshare.com/files/90673285/ARDA.pdf>
Same thing here <http://webxposed.blogspot.com/2007/09/reformed-druid-anthology-illustrated.html>

Druidism is listed with some pantheist resources <http://community.beliefnet.com/forums/showthread.php?p=941290>

Isaac Bonewits shows off his library <http://www.sk.librarything.com/profile/ibonewits>

A pattern called “Reformed Druid” http://www.colourlovers.com/pattern/311999/Reformed_Druid

Druid sigil by Thomas Butler
http://www.care2.com/c2c/photos/view/132/568568132/Artistic_Musings/000druid.jpg.html

Little mini essay on Modern Druidism <http://www.cbirdesign.com/blog/succession>

Irony Sade (with video playing harp) <http://www.esf.edu/success/sade.htm>



The 2008 Annual Golden Oak Awards (The "Oakie" Awards)



The Druid Academy Nomination Award Committee (DANAC) consists of a member drawn from six different Druid organizations that share a historical connection to each other and are primarily located in North America. The DANAC members wish to learn more about happenings in their own group, and in other groups, and encourage the best works of modern Druids by acknowledging their annual accomplishments.

The six judges are not official representatives elected by their respective groups, but were actually hand-picked by Michael Scharding, because he thought they were extremely knowledgeable famous folk who knew well both their own organization and the activities of other modern Druid groups. Therefore, their votes are therefore only a personal preference, not representative of any endorsement by their organizations.

- Tony Taylor of Henge of Keltria (HoK) tony_taylor@keltria.org
- Skip Ellison of Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF) skip@skipellison.usv
- Michael Scharding of the Reformed Druids of North America (RDNA) mikerdna@hotmail.com
- Ellen Hopman of Order of the White Oak (OWO) saille333@mindspring.com
- Ellis Arseneau of the Order of the Mithril Star (OMS) and Reformed Druids of Gaia (RDG) pendderwydd@reformed-druids.org
- Thomas Harris of the Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross (MOCC) [previously known as Reformed Druidic Wicca, RDW] myrddinamaeglin@yahoo.com

In the first round, each judge could nominate up to two entries for each of the ten categories of awards, choosing Druids who belong to any of these six organizations. Naturally, most judged nominated entries from within their own group, which they knew the best.

In the second round, each of the judges could vote for one entry from each of ten categories, but could not vote for their own nominee. If any nominee received two or more votes in the second round, then it was declared a winner. If a nominee received no vote or only one vote, then it was declared to be an "honorable mention".

Winners will receive a check for \$33.33, a certificate, and a blessed rock in the mail. Kudos and congratulations to all the entries!

Note: If you wish to enter the 2009 Golden Oak Awards of the DANAC committee, then send an e-mail to one of those judges listing a work from one of the ten categories that was done between December 21 2008 and December 21, 2009. They may designate an alternative judge if they would like to not participate in 2009. Different rules or categories may be used next year possibly. If you'd like your Druid organization to be added to DANAC send an e-mail to mikerdna@hotmail.com to begin a discussion.

The results of the voting were as follows:

1. Most interesting internal grove project begun or completed in 2008 Non-exhaustive examples include: liturgical design, fund- raising, recruitment, education, development, site-planning, web-development, meeting style, festival/meeting idea, etc.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNER.

2. Inspiring external project begun in 2008 by a grove or member (s) of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non-exhaustive examples include: activism, ecology, public outreach, legal moves, publishing, charity, civic involvement, interaction with other religious organization, etc.

WINNER #1: Healing the Lake Project

The Grove of the Golden Horse of KELTRIA has been working on healing one of the most polluted lakes in the United States as our Grove's Choice every Samhain (and randomly at other times as well) for a few years now. Onondaga Lake in Syracuse, NY was defiled many years ago by industrial waste, so much so that almost 50 years ago, fishing and swimming were not allowed there anymore. There have been many business proposals to clean up the lake, all costing millions of dollars and using elaborate methods, yet our lake remains unclean.

A few years ago, Chief Druid/Grove Leader TopazOwl read a book by Dr. Masaru Emoto entitled *The Hidden Messages in Water* (a New York Times Bestseller). In brief, the author discovered (to quote from the book jacket) that "crystals formed in frozen water reveal changes when specific, concentrated thoughts are directed toward them. He found that water from clear springs and water that has been exposed to loving words shows brilliant, complex, and colorful snowflake patterns. In contrast, polluted water, or water exposed to negative thoughts, forms incomplete, asymmetrical patterns with dull colors." The book contains actual high-speed photographs of frozen water crystals under several different conditions. The pictures consistently show that good thoughts and words directed at polluted water actually helps it form more complete crystals; in effect, it becomes healthier water.

The implications of this are astounding. It means we can heal water (and by extension, other things that contain or are made of water, including humans) simply by projecting good feelings and saying nice things! Of course, this is transformative magic, so we know that it is a magically sound practice. TopazOwl began to realize that we could actually help to heal the earth by healing the water in this manner. She decided that we should begin on a smaller scale and in our own back yard, where the pollution of the lake has been such a blight on our community for so many years.

Members of the Grove collect water from the lake in a clear bottle before our ritual. Dr. Emoto found that the water responded best to words and thoughts of love and gratitude (judging from the crystals it formed), so the Grove directs strong feelings of love and gratitude to the water in the bottle. We thank the water for its beauty and its life-giving properties -- all of the many things we can think of to thank it for and praise it for -- and we draw loving and healing symbols with intent on a white paper, which we then wrap like a label, except the symbols show from the inside (so the water can "see" it).

After the water has been exposed to the "loving label" for a time, it is returned to the lake. It is our belief that the energy-purified water, even though it is only a small amount, will spread its energy to the polluted water still in the lake, and so help to "entrain" the lake water with love and gratitude as well, starting a sort of "chain reaction." This way more is done with less energy, because to try to heal the entire body of water at once would be a daunting task.

The interesting thing we have observed is that, after the bottled lake water spends some time in the bottle with the loving and grateful words and symbols, it becomes much cleaner to the eye than when we first collected it.

Recently it was reported on the local news that there is evidence that the lake is slowly cleaning itself, that she is actually less polluted than she once was. This is good news, and Golden Horse Grove, for our part, will continue to help her indefinitely.

Email the grove care of topazowl@twcny.rr.com

WINNER #2: "[Pagan & Christian: Breaking the Vicous Cycle](#)" is about 9 megabytes or so, and very slow download. by Anna Marie Dostalova of the ADF Czech grove. See page 7 to page 9 for her article at http://adf.davnyobycej.cz/files/u1/Fundamental_Issues_2-2008.pdf About the author: I'm a 31 years old religious studies student from Prague Czech Republic. I've joined ADF a year ago. I pursue the Dedicant Program training and I've been very active in the emerging local Pagan community, conducting the first comprehensive research on Neopaganism in Czech Republic at my own costs. I am of Hellenic hearth culture. My involvement with EYCE has been, to my knowledge, the first remarkable Neopagan contribution to interfaith dialog in my country. I won't bore you more about myself, because the materials I enclose are descriptive enough of what I think is an "inspiring external project begun in 2008 by a member of ADF" (category 2).

Her website is: <http://adf.davnyobycej.cz/cs/Intro> and e-mail is noira777@gmail.com

HONORABLE MENTION: DAMIAN CARR

Inspired by my Druidic path I (Damian Carr) returned to the community of my youth, which is one of the top 5 most deprived in the UK, to use my skills and experience to make a difference to society. I personally have created, developed and successfully led a major 'vision' and campaign to build an eco-centre in the centre of the city of Manchester, UK. This will provide a connection with Nature to heal, enjoy leisure and have family fun. I have done this totally free of charge. I am the Chairperson of C4S.

http://www.c4stability.com/belle_vue_2020_vision.html

To achieve this I have fostered friendships and partnerships with people of many faiths and the main one is a Methodist Minister and Franciscan, Rev David Gray.

http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/1044097_bring_back_belle_vue - example of the excellent media I've received. I've also secured a high profile meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Communities to discuss this proposal in October.

Damian Carr, englishbard@googlemail.com of ORDER OF THE WHITE OAK
269 Longridge, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8PH, UK

3. Greatest hardship overcome in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Publicly admissible, of course, no gossip please. Non-exhaustive examples include: persecution, financial obstacles, medical impairments, isolation, time constraints, educational restraints, etc.

WINNER: SGT COISICHE MACNUADA

I found it impossible to get more details out of Coisiche, he is very humble. Anyway...

SGT Coisiche MacNuada (aka Shane R Novy) has served in the US Army Infantry from 2002 to present, has served three tours in Iraq; Baghdad, Al Fallujah, and Sadr City. In June of 2008 he was flown to Walter Reed because his kidneys had completely shut down. He had gotten sick and then tried to work out and then collapsed. He was put in the ICU until his kidneys resumed functioning. He is currently the vice President of ORDER OF THE WHITEOAK and has written a letter to the VA requesting the "Awen" symbol be placed on his military memorial should there be a need for that. His e-mail is at coisiche@NovyClan.net

4. Best Poem or song released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG.

WINNER #1: "Where I Am - A View of the Path" is a poem by Aauriane Veleda of KELTRIA is available at <http://www.keltria.org/hengehap/HH78-BP-Aauriane.htm>

WINNER #2: "I Paint You in Dark Stars" is a poem by Phagos of OMS/RDG that can be read at <http://druidsegg.reformed-druids.org/newsbeltane08-07.htm> Phagos can be reached at E-mail: koadprotogrove@yahoo.com

HONORABLE MENTION: "At the Threshold of Tomorrow" is a poem by Karl Schlotterbeck of KELTRIA that can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/tommorow.pdf>

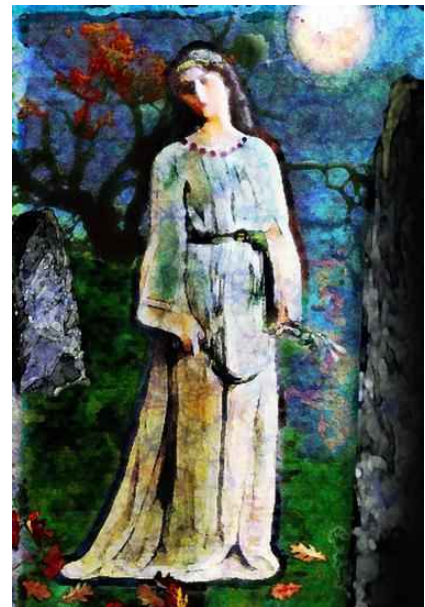
5. Best work of Art completed or released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non exhaustive examples: painting, drawing, sculpture, digital art, clay, collage, photography, etc. Dance choreography will be considered if an internet video is provided. Collaborating artists will receive a single prize.



WINNER #1: "The Stag" is a recent sample by Dan Ivanov, aerachguy@gmail.com of RDNA His website can be found at www.designartz.com The author is a solitary druid living near Pittsburgh. The painting can be seen at

<http://pic18.picturetrail.com/VOL916/4260765/8945341/339427991.jpg> or <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/DANACdan-ivanov-2.jpg>

WINNER #2: Thomas Butler's "Harvesting by Moonlight" thomas_m_butler1@yahoo.com of the RDNA at



http://www.care2.com/c2c/photos/view/132/568568132/New_Pieces_/druidess-harvest-.jpg.html or at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/harvesting-mistletoe.jpg> His other works can be viewed at http://www.care2.com/c2c/photos/view/132/568568132/New_Pieces_/

He explains, “The picture needs some explanation, I've been following a story for a couple of years of excavations in Cornwall. They started out accidentally, an experimental archaeologist digging a pit to build a furnace to work out early metallurgical techniques. What they found was the remains of a Holy site, a sacred well that dated back possibly thousands of years and had been filled in during the 16th century. It was filled in to fight lingering paganism and probably catholicism as wells were often dedicated to saints. Anyway many sites were destroyed during this period. Here's where the interesting thing comes in. The well they excavated must have been beautiful, lined with quartz crystals, the chief investigator described it as glowing in the moonlight, but even after the well was filled in and the landscape essentially became a bog offerings were left, continually. The most recent according to an article on Vox dated to the 1950's. Up until the 19th century someone performing rituals at a place like that faced real danger. Recently pagans have come to regard the possibility of real continuity with our pre-christian roots unlikely. An archaeological record exists. Perhaps there is more truth in uncle Gerald's stories than we now give him credit for. It'd be interesting to research other sites that were destroyed during that time period, records still exist. Anyway that is the inspiration for this picture. A woman still carrying on ancient traditions, alone by moonlight centuries ago in an oak grove, by water and standing stones. Cutting mistletoe with a golden knife is one of the the oldest druid rituals we have any record of, one of a very few.”

HONORABLE MENTION: The attached photo is of the painting "Sanctuary" by Wren Taylor of KELTRIA. She describes it as “A special place in the woods where the sun streams in.” You can send her E-mail care of : tony_taylor@keltria.org The photo can be seen at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/grove.jpg>



TWO HONORABLE MENTIONS: Christine's Photos “Little Frog” and “Sepia Berries” The artist says, “Currently, I am a hobbyist photographer with plans to eventually become professional. I live for taking pictures. The desire to take photos is with me at every moment. Taking pictures of Nature is my favorite area as it has a never ending supply of things to photograph. Whether a cool tree, funky mushroom or wild flower it's all worthy of my time and effort. With my New Nikon DSLR I can now take that hobby to new heights and have. Who knows what the future holds....” Christine Wityshyn of ADF at 2paws@telus.net

The photos can be seen at: <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/frog.jpg> and <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/berries.jpg>



6. Best craftwork completed or released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. Non exhaustive examples: leatherwork, metalwork, clothing, needlepoint, moulding, weaving, jewelry, basketry, woodwork, stonework, etc. Food, drink, cosmetics and brewing



can't be tested easily enough in disparate parts of the U.S. Collaborative craftspeople will receive a single prize.



WINNER #1 A display of hand-made pottery by Sebastien Beaudoin of the RDNA in Quebec. Note the presentation, with the horn and decoratively grown moss. E-mail: sbeaudoin@persona.ca The photo can be seen at: <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/pot.jpg>

WINNER #2: The Tree is a combination of the Celtic Four-Fold Wheel of the Year, the Qua-ballistic Map of Creation, Yggdrasil, represented as a Four-Fold Wheel, and the Time-Honored Bean Bag Toss. It was made by James Simpson, rustymon2000@yahoo.com of the RDNA. It is built on a 4X6 pice of 3/8s O.S.B. with built-up bas-relief features, and foam Acorns, Apples, and various doo-dads. It took me 4 weeks of after-work work to complete, and is rather light, thus easy to transport and set up.

The photo can be seen at

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/tree.jpg>



Honorable Mention: The "Valley Forge" Weaving

"The name of this pattern which I have attached in photograph, is called Valley Forge Dogwood, it was originally designed by Margarite P. Davison. The material presented was woven by myself using 100% natural organic cotton in the warp, while the woof or weft is composed of an organic wool worsted-dyed in a brilliant shade of kelly green with a single thread of black wool twisted into the fiber."

The Rev. Daibhaid O'BroderFiodoir_daibhi@bellsouth.net P.O. Box 98, Lindale, GA 30147

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft1.jpg>

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft2.jpg>

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/owocraft3.jpg>

7. Best academic book (or novel) released in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG. At least 50 pages in length, can be on any subject somehow applicable to "Druidism", modern or ancient, such as history, religion, crafts, art, philosophy, spirituality, ethnicity, language, etc.

WINNER: A DRUIDS HERBAL FOR SACRED TREE MEDICINE (Inner Traditions Bear & Company, 2008) by Ellen Evert Hopman of ORDER OF THE WHITEOAK. This book covers the herbal, magical and spiritual uses of the twenty original trees of the Ogham alphabet along with details about trees in Brehon Law, Druid magic and poetry. Practical hands-on herbal advice on harvesting and preparation of medicines and foods from the trees is included. It can be bought at your favorite independent book seller or from Ellen's website;

<http://www.celticheritage.co.uk/EllenEvertHopman/>

HONORABLE MENTION: **TAKUHI'S DREAM** is a Young Adult (ages 13-17) SciFi novel about a young professional woman who is pursued across the galaxy by a monster she cannot face and two men; one who clearly means her ill and the other who wants her for his latest

mission. They find out what the monster actually is and enlist its aid in the settling of the new planet Sogdien 3.

The book can be found only online for sale at <http://www.firedrakesweyr.com/> Do a search under Rita Trevalyan. That's her nom de plume. The druidic element in the book is that the monster helps to preserve the beautiful environment of the planet, so there is a nature element to the book. The author, Tezra Reitan, aka Tegwedd aka Rita Trevalyan has been a priestess of the Hazelnut Grove in California of the NRDNA since the mid-1970s and the Duir De Danu Grove since 1999. She also recently authored "Aengus Sweet Duet" a few years ago, about the Celtic god of Love visiting San Francisco.

9. Best "Druidical" essay or article released or printed in 2008 by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, OMS/RDG

WINNER #1 “**Druids Across Europe**” in three parts, by Searles O'Dubhain of KELTRIA. A copy of it can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/europe.pdf>

WINNER #2 “**Female Druids**” is an article that was published in The Magical Buffet, Imbolc 2008 issue. by Ellen Evert Hopman of ORDER OF THE WHITE OAK. The full article can be read at the link <http://themagicalbuffet.com/blog1/2008/02/29/female-druids/>.

HONORABLE MENTION #1: “**Encounters with the Horned God**” is an article that appeared in the summer 2008 issue of A BOND OF DRUIDS. It features the Horned God in His many guises, as I have known him. Written by Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille) of ORDER OF THE WHITE OAK. A copy of it can be read at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/2-BOD Summer 2008.pdf>

HONORABLE MENTION#2: “**Fiery Arrow of Bridget**” is a letter to the President, Oimeic 2008, by Topaz Owl of KELTRIA, (topazowl@twcny.rr.com) about the arrow's symbolism of Imbas; of which a copy can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/arrow.pdf>

10. Best movie or video-clip or instructional video, released or revised in 2008, that advances the positive perception of Druidism in some way produced by a member of ADF, Keltria, RDNA, MOCC, OWO, or OMS/RDG.

NO ENTRIES, NO WINNERS.



Druids who were also Women

Republished from The Magical Buffet, Imbolc 2008 issue

By Ellen Evert Hopman, Druidess, Order of the Whiteoak (Ord na Darach Gile)

*“Gaine daughter of pure Gumor,
Nurse of mead-loving Mide,
Surpassed all women though she was silent;*

She was learned and a seer and a Druid”.

(From “The Metrical Dinsenchas” - a history of the places of Ireland, compiled by medieval monks)

Most modern Pagans are Wiccans or Witches, according to the few surveys that have been done; we Druids are still a tiny minority. Women of Celtic heritage have told me that they did not pursue the

Druid path because “the Druids were all men”. But as more and more women study Celtic history, get degrees, do research, write books and teach in the colleges, the word is finally getting out that this is not so. But for millennia it has been a well kept secret.

Some of the blame for this misconception can be placed on the Roman historians who reported on Celtic culture, even as they decimated the Druids who were the intelligentsia. The Romans tended to ignore, downplay or overlook the true status of the women of the tribes.

The next groups to document Celtic society were male Christian monks who also tended to ignore and downplay the status of Celtic women while capturing the tales and oral histories in their scriptoria. Finally as modern archaeology and scholarship focused on Celtic artifacts and history, scholars until very recently were almost all men, who downplayed or ignored the role of powerful women in ancient Celtic times. But the evidence was always there for those who cared to find it.

The word “Druid” derives from the Indo-European “deru” which carries meanings such as truth, true, hard, enduring, resistant and tree. “Deru” evolved into the Greek word “drus” (oak) and referred over time to all trees as well as the words “truth” and “true”. “Id” comes from “wid”, “to know”, related to both “wisdom” and “vision”. A “Dru-id” is a truth-knower and a true-knower, one with solid and enduring wisdom, a tree-knower, and an expert.

The Proto-Indo-European word “dru” meant oak, and is related to “Druid”, so “Druid” also means “oak-knower”. Oaks are the most balanced of trees; their roots grow as deep as the tree is high. They give the hottest fire (excepting the ash tree) and provide medicine via their leaves and bark as well as food (acorns) for humans, pigs, and deer. They attract the attention of the Gods (via lightening) and survive to live up to a thousand years.

To be a Druid was and is to perform a tribal function. No king or queen could function without a Druid at their side, the ruler and Druid were described as “two kidneys” of a kingdom. It was the Druid who knew the laws and precedents without which a ruler could not pass judgment.

The Druids were poets and prophets, astrologers and astronomers, seers, magicians and diviners. They memorized the laws and kept the tribal histories and genealogies in their heads. They were ambassadors, lawyers, judges, herbalists, healers and practitioners of battle magic. They were sacrificers, satirists, sacred singers, story tellers, teachers of the children of the nobility, ritualists, astronomers and philosophers, skilled in natural science and mathematics. They specialized in one or several of these callings and spent twenty years or more in training. We know that Druids from all areas went to Britain, specifically to present day Wales, for regular gatherings and so their practices and beliefs must have been somewhat uniform.



What we know of the Druids comes to us from the written accounts of eye witnesses, from literary tradition and archaeology. Greek and Roman historians documented the Druids that they met; Julius Caesar, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Ammianus Marcellinus, Pliny, Diogenes Laertius, Suetonius, Pomponius Mela, Lucan, Tacitus, Dion Chrysostum, Lampridius, Vopiscus, Decimus Magnus, Ausonius and Hippolytus and others wrote their versions of Druid history.

Pliny gives us the only description of a Druid ritual that we have (the Druids preferred to keep their teachings in oral form, feeling they were too sacred to write down). He describes a white clad Druid climbing an oak tree on the “sixth day of the moon” to harvest mistletoe with a “golden sickle”. Of course gold is too soft to cut herbs with so any sickle would probably have been made of bronze, and we can only guess that the “sixth day of the moon” means six days

after the first appearance of the new moon.

Tacitus gives us the vivid account of the slaughter of the Druids by Roman soldiers on the island of Mona (Anglesey) in Wales. He says there were cursing black clad women there defending the island.

Since the island was the most sacred stronghold of the British Druids one can assume that these women were Ban-druid (female Druids) though since he does not say this outright we can never be sure.

Strabo describes a group of religious women living on an island at the mouth of Loir River but he does not call them Druids. In the *Historia Augusta* (a late Roman collection of biographies, in Latin, of the Roman Emperors from 117 to 284 CE) we learn that Diocletian and Aurelian consulted with female Druids as did Alexander Severus.

In Irish traditional accounts there are references to “bandruid” (female Druids) and “banfilid” (female poets). Fedelm is a female seer and Accuis, Col and Eraise are female Druids mentioned the Tain (The Cattle Raid of Cooley). Eirge, Eang, and Banbhuanan are Druidesses mentioned in the Siege of Knocklong, and Dub and Gaine are mentioned in the Dinsenchas.

Fedelma was a woman in queen Medb of Connacht’s court who was a “banfilid” (female poet) trained in Alba (Britain). The death of female poet Uallach daughter of Muinechán, who was the “woman poet of Ireland”, is mentioned in the Annals of Innisfallen for the year 934 and the Brehon Laws describe heavy penalties for illegal female satirists (whom they compare to female werewolves!). It is clear from these accounts that at least some women had attained the rank of Druid.

To shore up the evidence it will be helpful to look at the status of women in Celtic society before the Roman and Christian incursions and after. The marriage laws are an interesting place to start. The ancient Brehon Laws recognized nine types of marriage. In the first degree (the most desirable) both partners came to the union with equal wealth and status. In the second degree the husband came to the union with more wealth so he was in charge. In the third degree the wife came with more wealth so she was in charge. In all cases divorce was available to wives and in the first two degrees of marriage the husband had to pay a bride price to her father the first year and every year after that a large portion of the “coibche” went to the bride herself so that she could remain independent if the marriage failed. In the event of a divorce each spouse could claim any property they had brought to the union and the wife kept all the coibche she had accumulated. (Christian women would not see this kind of fair treatment again until very recent times).

Plutarch in “On the Virtues of Women” states that Celtic women participated in assemblies, mediated quarrels and negotiated treaties, for example one between Hannibal and the Volcae (this kind of ambassadorial work is a specifically Druidic function). Strabo says that Armorican priestesses (in modern day Brittany) were independent of their husbands.



We know that Celtic women wore trousers (the Celts invented trousers and there is a statue of a woman so dressed in the British museum). Gallic females went to war with their husbands and Irish Celtic women fought alongside their men. In some Roman reports they said the women were even fiercer than the men! (It took a series of laws issued over several centuries after the Christian missionaries arrived to wean Irish women away from weapons, indicating problems with compliance).

In the first century CE Tacitus wrote that “the Celts make no distinction between male and female rulers” and powerful Celtic women appear in the tales. By tradition Macha Mongruad founded Emain Macha (Navan Fort) in Ulster. The two most famous warriors in Irish history; Finn MacCumhail and Cú Chulainn, were both trained by women. Finn was raised by two females; a Druidess and a warrior woman who taught him the crafts of war and of hunting while Cú Chulainn learned the arts of war from Scáthach who had her own Martial Arts school.

Boudica was a Celtic queen who led the last British uprising against the Romans in 60 AD. She was a priestess of Andraste, Goddess of Victory. Saint Brigid of Kildare (Kil-Dara, Church of the Oak) had a different kind of power. She was the daughter of the Druid Dubhtach and according to the Rennes Dinsenchas was a “bandruid” (female Druid) before she converted to Christianity. She had both men and women in her religious community and she and her nuns kept a Fire Altar which was tended

continuously until 1220 when an archbishop ordered it quenched. This Fire Altar mirrored the perpetual fire of the Ard-Drui (Arch-Druid) that had burned at Uisneach for centuries (thankfully the fire has been re-lit in modern times and is now being tended once again by nuns and lay folk in Kildare and all over the world).

Archaeology gives us more evidence for female Druids. An inscription was found in Metz, France, that was set up by a Druid priestess to honor the God Sylvanus and the local Nymphs of the area. It was found on the Rue de Récollets; “Silvano sacr(um) et Nymphis loci Arete Druid antistita somnio monita d(edit)” (Année Epigraphique 1983, 0711)

Two famous burials, the Vix burial and the Reinham burial point to very powerful women of their time. The Princess of Vix (who may have been a priestess) dates from the late sixth to fifth centuries BCE in present day Burgundy, France. She was a woman of wealth and authority whose rich grave goods came from as far away as the Mediterranean Sea. Her wood paneled chambered grave held a huge bronze “krater” (a large ornamental urn used to mix wine and water for banquets), elaborate jewelry of bronze, amber, diorite, and serpentine, and a golden torque (a neck ring), symbol of noble status. She had fibulae (brooches) inset with Italian coral.

Many other female burials have been discovered between the Rhine and the Moselle rivers, where the women are laid out on wagons with rich jewelry and more impressive grave goods than some of the warrior chieftains of the time. The Reinham burial dates to the fourth century BCE by the river Biles in Germany and was an oak lined chamber filled with precious objects and jewelry. The body was laid out on a chariot with food and drink provided for her Otherworld sojourn. She was also buried with a torque on her chest, symbolic of her noble status.

So what happened? Why did an indigenous culture that featured educated and powerful women devolve into a culture where women were demoted to the status of chattel?

By the first century CE in Britain the Romans were actively and deliberately suppressing the Druids who were the intellectual elite, the advisors to the nobility and the glue that held the kingdoms together. Roman propaganda campaigns claimed that the Druids were the perpetrators of “savage superstition” and of horrific human sacrifice (at the same time that the Roman Circuses were going on). Druidesses were described as seers who were working on their own, rather than as powerful royal advisors and clergy. A policy of deliberate extermination was carried out, brought to conclusion by the terrifying slaughter of the Druids at Angelsey.

The Romans never conquered Ireland and the worship of the Pagan Gods continued there officially until the death of king Diarmat in 565 CE. (Unofficially it goes on to this day). But as Christianity gained power in all areas Roman ideals of matronly behavior and womanhood took over, though in the few centuries that it was allowed to flourish the Celtic Church continued to exalt powerful priestesses such as Brighid of Kildare and Beafelic of Northumbria. As the Roman Christian church gained ascendancy female Druids were labeled “evil Witches” and “sorcerers” as a way to smear their reputations and make people fear them. Religious orders founded by women were systematically dissolved upon their founder’s death, preventing continuity of female centered orders.



The Druids were demoted in the laws to figures of ridicule – mere magicians, stripped of their sacral function and status. Women in Celtic areas were forbidden to bear arms and their status dropped in most areas of life and society.

The current Druid revival of modern times began in the early eighteenth century, first in France and then in 1717 in England, the same year that the English Masons were established. The earliest English Druids of the current revival were all Masons and all men; the poet William Blake a prominent example. Gradually over the last few centuries, as more was understood about the actual Druids of history, the Druid Orders became more egalitarian in their membership until today most Orders are roughly half

male and half female. Women in most Orders (the only exceptions being the old English based Orders with roots firmly in the eighteenth century) have the same opportunities to be leaders and clergy as men.

Female Druids of today most often look back to our status in ancient times. We view ourselves as the inheritors of a rich ancestral lineage, going back to the Iron Age. That does not mean we have an unbroken tradition, we are actively engaged in reconstructing the ancient indigenous European tribal religion (leaving out the nasty bits such as slavery, animal sacrifice, and head hunting of course!).

I took an informal poll of the women on the Whiteoak mailing list to see why they became Druids and what if any problems they have faced on this path. One said that she was thrilled to find a religious tradition that worships outside in daylight, as opposed to Wiccans who often circle at night and indoors.

All the women who responded said they were voracious readers who upon learning how much of Celtic history and tradition was still out there became absorbed in the topic. The women all reported being scholars of one degree or another; in common with the ancient Druids modern ones tend to be intellectuals (one of the worst insults you can hurl at a Druid is to call them a “fluffy bunny” meaning a dim wit!).

Several of them complained that in modern times Druids are very hard to find. Unless one lives in a large metropolitan area this is almost always the case. To put together a gathering of modern Druids you will have to send notice out to several states.

Some female Druids report that they are Pagans who were not attracted to Wicca, which was after all, invented in the 1930’s by Gerald Gardner (see Ronald Hutton’s excellent book “The Triumph of the Moon”). They wanted something that was more tied in to actual Celtic tradition.

Others had problems with Wiccan theology. Wicca is duo-theistic (it assumes that “all the Goddesses are one Goddess and all the Gods and one God so it hardly matter who you call on in a ritual). The Celts, and every other indigenous Pagan tradition that I am aware of, were and are polytheistic. They see their deities as separate personalities with different and distinct functions though some, for example the Hindu-Vedic religions, posit an ultimate Source for all the Gods and Goddesses and all creation, called the Atma in Vedic scripture. (Many Druids study Vedic texts because the Vedic peoples were the ancestors of the proto-Celts and Vedic ritual and Celtic ritual must have had many similarities. We know that they had many basic principles in common; triple deities, making offerings to sacred fire and sacred water, the primacy of cows, etc.).

Another problem with modern Wicca for some is the so-called “Wiccan rede” (“An it harm none do what you will”). This tenet has been used as an excuse to behave in self-centered ways that no tribal society would tolerate. Druids study the Brehon Laws and we know that the ancients expected strict codes of behavior from all levels of society.

Wicca was revolutionary at its founding because it emphasized the role of the priestess in a way that had not been seen since ancient times. As a result many Wiccan and Witchcraft groups are led by women and composed of mostly women (or all women). Those who became female Druids found this to be unbalanced and not much different from male dominated patriarchal Christianity, Judaism or Islam. They sought a Pagan path with a healthier balance of males and females. Some report that they still have problems with sexism, even after they had attained the title of Arch-Druidess of their Grove (a Grove is the Druid equivalent of a Coven) there were male Druids who would challenge their decisions in a way that they would never challenge a male Arch-Druid. They would continue to nag the Arch-Druidess, figuring that if they did so long enough she would give in to their opinions.

None of these women came to Druidism out of rebellion against another religion. They came to it from a love for nature and the old European tribal ways. I can identify with these reasoning’s, they are all familiar to me and true.

Thanks to Stacey Weinberger (of RDNA), Sin Sionnach (a solitary Druid), and Athelia Nihtscada (of RDNA), for their input.

For an overview of ancient reports see "The Druid Sourcebook" by John Matthews, Blanford, London, 1996

For Brehon Laws and the laws of marriage see Fergus Kelly's "Guide to Early Irish Law", Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin, 1991

To explore the status of ancient Celtic women;

<http://www.unc.edu/celtic/catalogue/femdruids>

For links to basic texts, modern Druid groups and Orders; <http://www.whiteoakdruids.org>

About Ellen Evert Hopman

Massachusetts resident Ellen Evert Hopman has been active in American Druidism since 1984. She is co-chief of the Order of the Whiteoak (Ord na Darach Gile), a popular author of Druidry-related titles, and a master herbalist. She teaches at the Grey School of Wizardry and has contributed to several Pagan journals.

www.celticheritage.co.uk/elleneverthopman

<http://www.whiteoakdruids.org>

Info on A Druid's Herbal of Sacred Tree Medicine [Click Here](#)

Info on Priestess of the Forest: A Druid Journey [Click Here](#)



On Raising Druids

Irony Sade

November, 2008

The following is an open letter I wrote to my mother some years after joining the Reform.

I came to Druidry as many do, with the realization that here was a name for what I had felt and believed all my life. As time passed, I began to wonder how it was I ended up on this path without knowing what it was, how I became the kind of person who then becomes a druid. I decided, in part, it dealt with how I was raised, and wrote to thank my mother for it.

As my generation of druids' ages more of our questions turn to our children's lives. How can we love them, protect them, teach them, learn from them, or on bad days, survive them? How can we shoulder the enormous responsibility of ushering a new soul with its own mind and dreams in to this suddenly madding world? Some of us emerged from cycles of poverty or abuse; how can we avoid burdening our children with the same? Some of us enjoyed fortune far beyond our peers; how can we help our offspring realize that the

world owes them nothing?

Now as I find myself raising a child I am learning that none of these questions have answers. We cannot control our children, or the world they live in. All we can do is plant them as seeds, to nourish the soil they grow in, and to try give them the best possible start in a life they will chart for themselves.

Dear Mother,

The more people I meet the more unique I realize my upbringing was. The fact that I came from a sane, mostly happy, and unconditionally loving family is something I tend to take for granted. It is only in seeing the effects of its absence in others' lives that I realize how special it was. There is a threshold of emotional self-sufficiency which people pass- or fail to. Once a person has crossed that threshold the world can go to hell, and they will be fine. It could be argued that the whole purpose of parenting is to bring a child to that point and help it across. My brother and I passed that threshold years ago. You raised us superbly. I wanted to thank you for that.

Realizing this, and with an interest in raising my own children I want to know how you did it. I have not yet read all your child psychology books, nor had more than one mother, but I have given the matter much thought while raising a child of my own, and come up with this:

To Be A Parent

Three things you must never stint: **Food, Education, Love**
Three things you must teach: **Imagination, Ethics, Practicality**
Three things you must always encourage: **Questions, Choices, Dreams**

Three things you must never stint:

Food: Whatever else we had or didn't there was always food, lots of it, and only good stuff. I don't recall there ever being junk in the fridge. You wasted no money on it then, and today I have no taste for the stuff. However high the grocery bill was, you never stinted. Cloths, toys, entertainment might be neglected, but food never was. This kept us all strong, healthy, and growing, giving us well-nourished minds and bodies. It laid the groundwork for everything else.

Education: Besides food, there were always books, museums, telescopes, libraries, and classes in whatever we were interested in. On top of this you shared your own extensive knowledge, and, when nothing else would serve, pointed out the ways and places to study things beyond your ken. School was always a given. I doubt either of us ever imagined not going to college. As food nourished our bodies, education fed our minds, leaving only the soul to be dealt with.

Love: I remember no words to this effect. As with everything, actions are more meaningful. Reading us stories, talking, spending time, caring what we thought and did, the entire fact of raising us- all of that was rooted in love, but it will take a greater poet than I to say what that is. It was always there. It is essential.

These three things you must never keep from a child. You never did. Thank you.

Three things you must teach:

Imagination: They say you cannot teach this. Nonsense. You hardly ever bought us toys, yet you made many, and so did we. Newsprint became paper-mache, loom rubble became swords,

string became castles and spider webs, cloth and cardboard became fishes and dragons. We learned that reality could be rearranged. What else is imagination?

Ethics: The knowledge of good and evil. I still don't know how this is taught. When situations arose you discussed them with us. When we lied, you made us think it through and see the instability of it. You made us think, choose, and take responsibility. Mostly though, I believe it is through example and experience that we learn about good and evil. Where there was pain, you healed; where there was wrong, you righted. You encouraged us to do the same—and you never glorified the bad.

Practicalities: There is a hidden premise in all of this: Life is to be lived for dreams, charted by ethics, and managed through practicalities. Without dreams even a good, functional life will be aimless. Without ethics a successful dreamer may be a monster. Without practical skills your dreams may be unreachable. The third thing a parent must teach is as much practical knowledge as possible. How to cook, clean, take care of yourself, doctor cuts, manage finances, arrange trips, read maps, plant gardens, repair clothes, fix houses, milk cows, use computers... It is an endless list. The more practical skills you can teach a child the smoother his life will be, the less help he will need; the more attention he can give to more important matters.

Three things a parent must always encourage

If people were plants, the first triad of qualities describes the soil one should plant a child in. The second set involves parental guidance of the young shoots. The third contains those things that must be encouraged so that the new plant, upon attaining awareness, can guide its own growth for the rest of its life.

Questions: You encouraged these admirably, to the eternal consternation of everyone I encounter. More than providing information this taught me to expect answers, and to answer honestly when I myself am questioned. Now we see the overlap in the triads. Education, ethics, practicalities and dreams are all fueled by and give rise to questions. They are the dialectic that informs the act of living.

Choices: Be it as simple as corn vs. succotash, by offering choices and honoring our answers you taught us that our decisions make a difference, and gave us experience making them. We also learned that choice entails both freedom and consequence, a thing too many never seem to understand. With questions and choices we steer our lives, to dreams we plot our voyages.

Dreams: This may be the most exasperating part of being a loving parent- encouraging all our disparate dreams. Gymnastics, weaving, archery, ice-skating chemistry, astronomy, sailing, filmmaking, acting, soccer... Each time our interests led us somewhere else you encouraged that dream, giving us the opportunity to explore each new thing. You bought us tools, but never toys, and let us move elsewhere when the impulse took us. Because of this we believe that anything is possible, and have the mental tools to make it so.



Weeding the Garden

by Bardd Dafydd of ADF
Reprinted with permission.

I'm reprinting it not because I advocate his style, but it is thought-provoking. –Editor

This article is about chronically disruptive people in Neopagan groups and what we can do about them. We'll examine who these people are and why we seem to attract so many of them and talk about some of the common types of troublesome people. Finally, we'll explore a simple yet effective strategy for dealing with the problem.

As Senior Druid of Red Oak Grove, ADF, I have been leading a Neopagan group for almost 7 years and have had to deal with at least 9 individuals who were disruptive to the point where they became a major problem. All eventually left the Grove, but some of them caused serious problems for years before they left. I've also talked to the Senior Druids of many other Groves and found out how they handled their problem members. In addition, I have been on the Mother Grove of ADF (its international Board of Directors) several different times, and we have had to deal with disruptive members on an organizational level. I've also been the leader of several non-pagan groups and been teaching leadership skills for the past 11 years.

All of this experience has given me some insights into this problem that I'd like to share with others. Hopefully, other groups can learn from all the mistakes we've made and the result will be more Neopagan groups that grow, blossom and bear fruit.

Acknowledgment

I am indebted to the book [Antagonists in the Church](#) by Kenneth C. Haugk for getting me to think about this problem and its potential solutions. Although written by a Pastor expressly for Christian congregations, it's a good book and ought to be studied by any Neopagan group leader. It does an excellent job of exploring why certain people behave antagonistically and gives some excellent general advice on how to deal with them in the early stages of their discovery, but I don't think he ever gets specific enough about what to ultimately do about them. In this article, I try to explore the problem in light of our own unique situation and take his advice to its next logical step.

What do we want?

You probably belong to a small Neopagan group. You most likely joined this group, or started it yourself, because you wanted to worship the Old Gods in your own way and you want company. For most of us, it's a lot easier and more fun to do this when you have a group of friends and supporters to help. You can share the roles and speaking parts in ritual, and the magic seems so much stronger. You also probably like the social interaction of a group. There is friendship, opportunities to learn from people who are knowledgeable in areas you are not, and there may even be romantic possibilities. You can share jobs, like cooking and cleaning up, and there will be people to help you put your tent up when it's getting dark. And you can share resources, like books and ritual tools and camping gear.

When you join or start a group, you hope that everyone will be friendly and open and nice. While you may love the diversity and excitement of associating with many different kinds of people, you don't want them to be too different. While it may be interesting to talk openly with someone who, for

example, has a sexual lifestyle that is completely different from yours, you expect them to follow the same rules of behavior that you do: to take turns speaking, to listen attentively, and not be too offensive or rude, etc.

Many times, when a group first forms, everything seems to work out fine. You get all of the above benefits and then some. And as the group gets bigger many of these positive aspects blossom even more, and you have more opportunities, more resources, and more support than ever before. It's great!

But sooner or later, the group has a problem.

What's the problem?

All too often a small Neopagan group begins to notice that one member, or a small group of members, are repeatedly causing problems. They might be arguing more than most people, or raising their voice a lot more than average, or disrupting the flow of meetings or rituals in some way. They may be making demands about changes they want to make in the rules or Bylaws of the group. Or the problem may be with their interpersonal relationships with other members of the group. There may be sexual factors involved, or financial problems, or erratic behaviors, or an inappropriate number of personal favors that are asked for. Frequently, there's a combination of several of the above problems.

When this disruptive behavior is first noticed, the other members of the group will begin talking about it and how it is affecting them. Chances are it will be ignored for quite a while—maybe months, maybe even years. While many people will agree that "something should be done" to change the behavior, there probably won't be a consensus of what that "something" should be. Most people will agree that any steps they take to try to correct the problem will only have a slim chance of being successful but will almost certainly be uncomfortable, so they won't be anxious to take them.

Many people will hope that the problem just goes away. Maybe the person will change on their own. Maybe they will get tired of acting like that. Maybe they will just quit the group and move on. "Let's just wait and see what happens. Maybe it will all work out."

And sometimes that's exactly what happens. Sometimes people change drastically, on their own, for the better. It could happen. But it usually doesn't. And if the problem doesn't go away, it will probably get worse.

Perhaps a few hints are dropped. Perhaps a go-between has a few words with the troublemaker, asking them to be more "reasonable". That might work; but even if it does, the change usually doesn't last. The leader of the group will get involved at some point. They may try official means to stem the disruption. Once that happens, the troublemaker will usually turn against the group's leader (if that hadn't already happened) and begin a concerted campaign to show everyone what a poor leader they have. It will become very personal.

In all too many cases, the behavior just gets more outlandish, more noticeable, and more troublesome as time goes on. The severity of the behavior will increase and so will the frequency. There may be loud arguments in which the "good people" say some not-so-nice things and some things they shouldn't. There may be some vicious emails exchanged, full of accusations and defenses. Sometimes the content of these emails will become a new problem in itself. And sometimes that problem becomes even more important than the original problems were. A tremendous amount of time can be wasted in reading and writing emails which do little more than attack or defend the contents of other emails.

Other people in the group will find themselves talking about the troublemaker a great deal of the time. It becomes a favorite topic, something that almost everyone can agree on. Sometimes people may even enjoy talking about the problem person. They'll make jokes at his or her expense, behind their back. People will roll their eyes when the person speaks or indulges in their objectionable behavior. They will catalog the many instances of the bad behavior and recite them to each other, back and forth, many times, memorizing the details and fixing the chronology in their minds. This division of "us good folks"

vs "that problem person" can actually become a focus for bonding—bringing other people closer together in a mutual cause. Bonding is good. But there are healthier ways to do it.

Very often innocent people that had nothing to do with the original problem will quit the group or just quietly fade away. New guests may show up once or twice and never be heard from again. It will probably be suspected that the troublemaker is the reason for this, but it may be hard to prove.

If the problem gets bad enough, eventually something will have to snap. People will form clear sides and make a stand. Someone may say something like, "Either she goes, or I go!" The troublemaker may quit or be forced out of the group through social pressure or by established group procedure. Because almost everyone has a few friends, very frequently other members of the group will also leave at the same time the troublemaker does. If the group survives the split, it will usually be weaker and probably quite bitter about all the aggravation that it went through. Many groups completely dissolve over a situation like this. Other groups stay together but grumble about each other for years after the split. Their ongoing mutual hatred can hang over the entire Neopagan community in that area, influencing decisions about who to invite to what events.

It's a very nasty scenario, and unfortunately it has occurred over and over again. Will we ever learn?

Why us?

All churches attract a share of "odd" people. Even the most conservative Christian church is likely to contain a few individuals that don't integrate well with the others. It's to be expected. Most people desperately want to associate with other people in groups for mutual support and social interaction. The vast spectrum of human personalities covers a very wide range, from saints to sociopaths. While most of us would be called "normal" (by definition), there are plenty of people on the fringes, and many of them want to belong to clubs and churches as much as we do. So in any group, there are bound to be a few that fall far enough outside the norm that they cause problems for the others.

A Neopagan group is probably much more likely to attract unusual people than the local Presbyterian congregation. The fact that we are a minority religion with beliefs and practices far outside the mainstream makes it more likely that we will attract people who live far from the mainstream in other areas. Neopagans are usually very open to alternative lifestyles and sexual behaviors. Count how many people have tattoos and body piercings in your Neopagan group. And how many are either gay or bisexual or engage in alternative practices? Compare that percentage to other groups you have been in, and you'll probably see a big difference. Perhaps there is some correlation between people who choose a Neopagan lifestyle and the tendency to exhibit other unusual behaviors. Or perhaps the range of Neopagan behaviors is wider than it is for non-pagans.

Because Neopagan groups are usually much smaller than the average small-town church, the presence of even a single disruptive member will cause far more damage and commotion than it would in another group. In a group of 150 Methodists, a single person complaining about the service is far outnumbered by all the people who liked it. If the dissatisfied person finds one or two friends to agree, they are still in a very small minority. But in a group of 10 Neopagans, that person would make a considerable influence and, if joined by one or two others, would seem to be a much larger percentage of the group than they really are.

Neopagan groups are so small, in fact, that many of them are constantly on the verge of being too small to function. We tend to have fairly complicated rituals that are normally conducted by 6 to 12 different people, all working together. Frequently, every member of the group has a part in the ritual. If several people all seem upset at the same time, maybe we bend over backwards to keep them happy, rather than risk losing so many people that we feel we need. So we tolerate outrageous behavior and let it grow worse.

And because Neopagan groups are composed of many people who live outside the mainstream in other areas of their life, we are probably conditioned to be extra tolerant of strange behavior. So we might not

notice a problem person as quickly as the First Baptist Church would, and once we do notice the problem behavior, we may be more hesitant to object to it because we aren't so "normal" ourselves. Our standards for "normalcy" are far more flexible than those some people.

What can we do about it?

We want to play in a garden of beautiful flowers. We want to be supported by their company while we enjoy their diversity and be enriched by their abundance. But every so often, we find a nasty weed right in the middle. No amount of watering and fertilizing is going to turn it into a rose or a lily. It just gets bigger and tougher, and usually it spreads. Where there was one weed, now there are two or three. They are taking over the garden. There's only one thing we can do: we have to pull out the weeds and throw them out of our garden.

Do we have the right to weed our garden?

Of course we do! In America, we talk about Democracy so often that we sometimes get mixed up about what it means. It means that every sound-minded person over 21 years of age has the right to cast a vote and be represented in the Government, but it does not mean that we have to let a few individuals spoil things for the rest of us. The Bill of Rights grants us the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have the right to associate with whom we want, when we want and to not associate with people we find objectionable.

Although there are certain cases where a person cannot be excluded (you can't refuse to serve Spaniards in your restaurant, for example), we generally have the right to form groups of supporting individuals to accomplish common goals. We have the right to restrict membership to those people who are actually helping and to keep others out.

On June 28, 2000, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America had the right to bar homosexuals from membership because the scouts felt that the homosexual lifestyle was inconsistent with the BSA message. It doesn't matter what you think about that particular case, the important thing is that based on the right of associative expression, the Supreme Court has upheld a group's right to determine who its members are. It is unlawful to bar membership based on certain specified characteristics, such as race or gender, but the law does not require clubs to accept everyone who seeks admission to the group. Ironically, the same law is being used by the United Way to protect its right to withdraw financial support to the Boy Scouts because of the Boy Scouts' homophobic practices!

But aren't we supposed to be making the group grow?

Yes, that's probably a goal of your group. That makes it extra difficult to pull a weed and possibly lose some other members at the same time. But your focus must be on the long-term health and well-being of the whole group, not just the short-term number of members.

Remember, a noisy weed can cause other people to quit and scare off many potential members before the weed is pulled. The longer the weed is in the group, the more damage it can do. The faster it is pulled, the faster the group can recover and begin growing again. More than once I've noticed that as soon as a weed was pulled, a couple new members suddenly turned up to take their place.

Who are these weeds?

There are many, many kinds of weeds that can invade your garden. They have a wide variety of attributes and come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. The one thing that they all have in common is that they cause trouble. They draw an inordinate amount of attention to themselves in some way, and the rest of the group has to work extra hard to deal with the results.

Here are 15 varieties that I've managed to identify, so far:

- The Know-It-All
- The Sexual Predator
- The Amateur Lawyer
- The Evidence Collector
- The Needy Person
- The Generous Giver
- The Vocal Minority
- The Whiner
- The Shouter
- The Questioner
- The Latecomer
- The Alcohol Problem
- The Outlaw
- The Nut
- The Antagonist



We'll probably never finish compiling the definitive list of all the different types of weed, because new varieties are bound to show up from time to time. But by studying some of the common types of weed, we'll learn to recognize them quickly; and we'll be able to deal with them fast, before they spread too far or get too deeply rooted.

Some varieties require special handling, too, so we need to understand them and know what to do when we encounter each one. And as new varieties appear, we need to be alert for new techniques and new strategies for dealing with them.

Please understand that the use of the term "weed" is only meant as shorthand to identify:

a person who repeatedly exhibits one or more objectionable behaviors to a particularly annoying degree within the context of a specific group in a given set of circumstances and doesn't seem capable or willing to change those objectionable behaviors.

I don't really believe that there is any such person as a "Know-It-All" or a "Whiner", and I don't believe these people are "weeds" within the context of general humanity. They are only "weeds" in the very limited context of a specific Neopagan group, which is trying to attract and keep a number of similar individuals who get along together. In reality, each person is a unique and priceless individual, made by the Gods and worthy of being loved. But some of those people are so annoying that it's best to stay away from them.

Keep in mind that most weeds exhibit behaviors from more than one of these "types". Most importantly, remember that just because a person exhibits some of the following behaviors, that doesn't mean that the person is so bad that they should automatically be thrown out of your group. Talk to them first. Give them another chance. None of us are perfect.

Here's a few of the types that I've noticed:

The Know-It-All

This annoying weed frequently contradicts others who are speaking, no matter how little they know about the topic at hand. No matter what the subject, this pesky weed always seems to have contrary information and proof that some other point of view is correct. They will interrupt a speaker with a phrase such as, "No, actually...." or "The real truth about that is..." and then launch into a long explanation that may or may not make any sense or have any relevance.

The Sexual Predator

There is nothing wrong with joining a group because you are looking for friendship, company, or even a romantic relationship. In fact, Church is one of the very best places to go looking for a potential spouse, because the two of you are more likely to share similar values and beliefs. That common bond will help you in many aspects of life, especially if you plan to raise children

together. But some people seem to join a Neopagan group because they think that it is an easier way to get sexual gratification. While it might be true that some devout Neopagans happen to have a more casual attitude toward sexual encounters, the weeds are there for sex first, religion second. They may begin flirting through email, before they even meet you; or they may try to strike up a romantic relationship the first time they visit your group. If they are rebuffed, they may very quickly move on to someone else. I've seen people like this try to form sexual bonds with three different people during three consecutive events.

The Amateur Lawyer

Some people have a love affair with rules and laws and cannot resist interpreting them in interesting ways. Beware of anyone who asks to see the Bylaws very early in their involvement with the group. (Most people are with a group for years and have no desire to ever see them.) The Lawyer will scour the Bylaws and find conflicting passages or instances where someone has broken the letter of the law, even while following the spirit of the law.

The Evidence Collector

Weeds love to gather evidence. Yet just collecting evidence is not proof of a weed, because the good leader may need to collect evidence against the weed to get them out. But weeds seem to start collecting evidence before anyone knows there's even a problem. They will often tip their hand by quoting back emails to show that they are "right".

The Needy Person

We all enjoy doing favors for each other. It feels good to help someone out. And it feels good when a friend does something nice for you, in return. But there is a subtle balance that goes on in a true friendship; and if it starts to tip over too far in one direction, both people will feel it, and someone will take steps to put things back in balance. The needy weed loves that imbalance—as long as it's tipping in her favor. She'll request favors continually—small ones as well as big ones. There may be very compelling reasons why this favor needs to be done. It may be a matter of a child's health or the family's income or some such important issue. But the requests will keep on coming, and they may get larger and larger.

The Generous Giver (with strings attached)

The Giver uses the opposite strategy from the needy weed—she gives and gives and gives, but always with some string attached. The string may be just emotional support, or public attention, or expression of gratitude. The gifts may be inappropriate. They may be too expensive, or too personal, or given at inappropriate times. They will usually require a lot of attention to acknowledge them.

The Vocal Minority—Misplaced

This will frequently be a person following a slightly (or vastly) different path from the rest of the group. They might be Norse in a Celtic group or a Wiccan in a Grove of Druids, or a Reconstructionist with a bunch of eclectics. Whatever they are, they will feel oppressed and under-represented. They will loudly lobby for more equal time. While there is certainly a lot of value in accommodating all of our beliefs or preferences to some extent, it quickly becomes obvious when a small minority makes unreasonable demands upon the majority in the interest of fairness.

The Whiner

The Whiner seems to complain about everything: the dates and times you pick for rituals or meetings, the parts you assign to them and to others, the food, the weather, everything. You can waste a lot of time trying to logically explain why a certain date was chosen or a certain course of action was undertaken, but that won't satisfy the Whiner. They don't really want the answer, they want the attention.

The Shouter

This weed makes lots of noise. He gets upset easily and yells and screams at other people at high volume. All other conversation in the area will usually have to stop as people sit around uncomfortably and listen to the ranting.

The Questioner

It's great when people ask questions about the ritual and your beliefs and the mythology you use. But when someone seems to ask too many questions, or asks the same questions over and over, beware! They may be just manipulating your time and attention, and they can't think of any better way than to repeat a question you've already answered.

The Latecomer

This late-blooming weed can be particularly annoying if you like to start things on time. They will repeatedly arrive late, or find something else they have to do when all the rest of the group is getting ready to begin a ritual, a business meeting, or some other event. They will beg you to wait for them, and you'll be surprised by how long it takes them to use the restroom, or to change their clothes.

The Alcohol Problem

This might be a person who drinks every day, or it may be a person who only drinks a few times a year—but those times seem to be at your events and always seem to cause problems with your group. Conversely, this might be a person who is very opposed to alcohol and loudly complains when alcohol is present. Most people are tolerant about the moderate use of alcohol, and most people use alcohol moderately. When someone falls too far outside the norm and causes problems—whether they are falling down drunk or screaming at someone for drinking—they are disruptive. Most of this applies to other intoxicants, as well.

The Outlaw

Many people break a law from time to time—maybe by driving too fast or not reporting every dollar of their income. I think we can expect that and live with it. But when someone has legal problems that seriously interfere with the normal functioning of the group, they become a disruption. Some people seem to have recurring legal problems, or their legal problems are just more severe than the group can stand. For example, if a member of my group were a rapist, I'd want him gone.

The Nut

I think it's very important that we don't pretend to have medical expertise that we don't really have. To do otherwise is to invite legal trouble, or self-delusion at the very least. But at the same time, it's obvious that some people have behavior that is so far outside the norm that they are uncomfortable to be around. They might be too happy, or too sad, or too scared, or too brave. They might see or hear things that no one else does, or they might come to conclusions that no one else can understand. Just exhibiting one or two of these traits to a mild degree doesn't usually make a person a problem—but if someone exhibits them to an extreme, or too often, they can be impossible to be around. This type of person is very perplexing because their thought processes are so hard to understand. In fact, they may be beyond comprehension. If you seriously think someone in your group is a danger to themselves or to others, I think you have an obligation to alert the authorities. But many nuts are not dangerous, just terribly annoying; and in those cases, you might just want to be rid of them.

The Antagonist

This is a person who is hungry for power and influence and will use various methods to attain his goals. He is well described in *Antagonists in the Church* by Kenneth C. Haugk.

What do they all have in common?

Many of them seem to want attention and power over the group. Getting a greater-than-average share of attention and holding on to it are ways to control the group. If we are focused on the troublemaker, we can't be doing other things. Sometimes we can be pretty sure that they are acting very deliberately and with great cunning.

Others seem to be oblivious to the trouble they cause, or seem to be victims themselves. I sometimes wonder if subconsciously they are very much aware of what they are doing. But we have no way of knowing, do we?

The only thing they all have in common is that they are causing trouble and problems for you and the others.

How serious is the problem?

Look, we all have problems. And we expect that we will have to deal with a certain amount of problems that come our way through others. Just because a given person causes a problem or two doesn't mean they aren't worth having in your group. But when someone has consistent or serious problems that interfere with the smooth functioning of the group, you have to ask yourself if they are worth the aggravation. Most people will be. But some people will be more trouble than they are worth. These are the ones that I am calling "weeds".

How do I really know this is a weed?

You don't. Despite your very best intentions and all the care you are taking, you might be making a mistake. So you don't pull a weed lightly.

The very first thing you should do is make darn sure the person's complaints are not actually valid. Be open to the possibility that the root cause really lies elsewhere. Perhaps there is a problem with the leadership of the group, or a certain clique of members, or a particular policy. You should be especially cautious if you find the same sorts of complaints coming up repeatedly. Maybe you really have a problem with your own leadership style or something else within your group that you need to fix. Since most of us don't see our own shortcomings, it's a good idea to ask one or two trusted members of your group to give you some honest feedback on whether you might be contributing to this situation in ways you don't realize. Then listen to them carefully and without argument. You want to be on very firm footing before you cast the blame in another direction.

Even if you are sure the problem stems from the person in question, you should still think about it carefully and pray about it and ask your Gods for guidance. You need to thoroughly explore other ways of dealing with the issue, preferably when it first appears and hopefully hasn't grown to be a major problem. You might offer the person some pastoral counseling, if anyone in your group is qualified to give it. Or you might recommend that they get help from outside your group.

If none of the above works, and you are convinced that the group would be better off without the weed, you consult with the other officers in your group, or the other members, and you act only when you are reasonably sure that you're pulling a weed—not a strange flower.

Ultimately, you accept the responsibility that you might be making a mistake, but that you are doing it with good intentions and very careful thought. You are doing the best you can. You acknowledge that you may not be perfect, but you have to act. Then you just do it. It's not easy. But I believe it's one of the prices of leadership.

So what do we do now?

Once you are reasonably sure you've identified a weed, and the important decision makers have decided that it's got to go, you should pull it as soon as possible. You want to minimize contact between that person or their group and the rest of your group. Don't worry about legalities and rules—just send a short, polite letter to the individual or individuals, on behalf of the group, saying that they are no longer welcome in the group. Use the most euphemistic, generalized language you can. Resist the impulse to make your case and prove that you have the right to expel them. Anything you say at this point will most likely fall on deaf ears and only open you up to further questions and conversation.

We made a lot of mistakes over the years and tried many different approaches. Here's an example of the kind of letter you might consider sending:

Dear Weed,

As we told you in January and again in March and May, you have repeatedly created a disturbance in our group by raising your voice in meetings and demanding equal time for the Hawaiian Gods you worship. When you told Mary that she was "a low-down, conniving snake" for voting against your pot luck supper idea, we felt that you were being mean-spirited and an obstruction to the joyful camaraderie of our little group. When you were late for ritual on August 3rd, after being warned about unnecessary tardiness on at least three or four occasions, you disrupted the energy of the whole group.

Therefore, it is with deep regret that we must ask you to please resign from our group. If you refuse to resign, we shall be forced to banish you in accordance with Bylaws 5, 6, and 9.

Do not write to any of our members; and if you show up at any more of our functions, we will be forced to contact the Grand Bishop of Eris to have your membership revoked. We might also be forced to call the police to have you removed.

Sincerely,

Joe Smith

High Priest, Local Congregation, Church of Eris

PS: We've all talked it over at great length, and we think you need professional counseling. As your friends, we strongly recommend that you seek the help of a competent psychiatric professional. If you get the help you need and can prove to us that you are significantly better, we might be willing to take you back.

Sounds pretty reasonable, right? In fact, this is the worst possible letter you could write. I should know—I have personally tried all of the techniques within it, and they usually backfired on us. Here are some of the problems the letter has:

- 1) *As we told you in January and again in March and May...* Too many details, and it sounds like you are collecting evidence. The weed can claim that he didn't get that email, or remembers the meeting differently. It's unlikely that you can prove that he received every email, and it's unlikely you recorded all the meetings. It becomes your word against his.
- 2) *...you have repeatedly created a disturbance...* That's subjective. The weed might find a member or two who disagrees with that conclusion.
- 3) *...by raising your voice in meetings...etc.* More details that are subjective and can be refuted.
- 4) *...we must ask you to please resign from our group.* This technique has worked for us a couple times, but what if they refuse? It prolongs the process and creates more pain.
- 5) *If you refuse to resign, we shall be forced to banish you in accordance with Bylaws 5, 6, and 9.* Anytime you have to use specific Bylaws to justify your actions, you are opening yourself to those Bylaws (and all other Bylaws) being interpreted differently and possibly even have them being used against you.
- 6) *Do not write to any of our members...* Don't tell them what to do. You have no authority. If you expect a barrage of hate email, warn your members and help them set up filters, if they want. Or ignore them. Or set up an auto-delete filter for all their email. But you might want to keep a copy of all email from them in a folder, just in case.
- 7) *...and if you show up at any more of our functions, we will be forced...* It doesn't hurt to have a couple of backup plans in mind, if things don't go the way you want, but you gain nothing by tipping your hand

or making threats. And what you lose is the element of surprise, and you also risk their using the threat against you.

8) *...to contact the Grand Bishop of Eris to have your membership revoked.* If the person has been that much trouble, you should have already told the Grand Bishop about the problem, privately and confidentially. But you probably don't have the authority to have their membership revoked, so you're just being dramatic and unnecessarily confrontational.

9) *We might also be forced to call the police to have you removed.* This is escalating the problem unnecessarily. Some sorts of people will take this as a personal challenge and show up, just to see if you'll follow through with your threats.

10) *Sincerely,...Joe Smith* The more impersonal you can make the letter, the better. If you sign it with a single person's name, all of their anger will be focused on that person. It can easily become a personal battle, with name calling and accusations against the leader, if pointing out any flaws of the leader, whether real or imagined, would make the troublesome person somehow more acceptable to the group. Sure, the leader of the group probably wrote it, or maybe just approved it, but the recipient doesn't know that for certain. Their anger will be diluted by being diffused.

11) *We've all talked it over at great length...* Sure you have. You'd be foolish not to. But to point this out to the person you've been talking about is overly rude and humiliating. You're just trying to ease your conscience by spreading the blame around to more people.

12) *...we think you need professional counseling.* I know how tempting it is to do this: on one side, you feel in your gut that no sane person could act like that, and you'd like to think that a mental health professional would agree with you. It would give you validation. On another side, you naturally feel bad about pushing a person out of the group, and this makes it seem like you are actually doing it partly to help them. But save your breath. They are not likely to take your advice; they will resent the suggestion and take it in the worst possible way. They might even think that you have overstepped your bounds and are practicing medicine without a license. (Which might be true, depending on exactly how you phrased your suggestion, what your position is, what your training is, and the laws in your area.) Just come to terms with the fact that you are kicking them out to make the group better. That's your job. Let someone else be their counselor. If you feel they are a danger to themselves or others, call the police. If you simply must tell them to seek counseling, for your own conscience, then have an individual member of your group (or several of them) do that on their own. And make sure that they make it perfectly clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the group—they are just expressing their own personal concerns and opinions to a "friend".

13) *...If you get the help you need and can prove to us that you are significantly better, we might be willing to take you back.* What, are you crazy?! That's the last thing you want to offer. You think that they are going to visit a therapist for a few months and run back to you with a note saying that they are nice now? Sure, it could happen, but don't count on it. Again, you're just trying to make yourself feel better. Make a clean break. If they actually do get their heads together and decide to come back to you (both are unlikely), then cautiously reevaluate them.

Almost every point in the above letter is, at best, an opening for a weed to come back to you for clarification, rebuttal, and endless argument. And at worst, some of the above could be used against you as evidence to show that you are in some way unfit to be the leader. Some of it might possibly be used against you in court. Either way, you will just be dragging out the process and probably causing more pain.

But there are no laws that say we have to like anyone. A much better approach is a very short and polite note that doesn't contain any specifics. Like this:

Dear Weed,

We've noticed that the interpersonal dynamics between you and some of the people in our group are not as smooth as we'd like. We've agreed that while you have many positive qualities that would be an asset to most groups like ours, in our specific case the overall balance would be disruptive.

We wish you all the best in your future spiritual path.

Sincerely,

Local Congregation, Church of Eris

You might want to customize the above letter a bit to better fit the circumstances, but avoid the impulse to add any more detail than absolutely necessary. Notice that this letter doesn't accuse them of anything, doesn't mention any specific details that could be refuted, and doesn't make any sort of legal claim or give any internal justification. It just says that the way they act doesn't mesh with the group. It's short and simple.

Don't we need to prove our case?

No, that's the LAST thing you want to do! You are not "charging" the troublesome person with a crime, so they don't have to defend themselves. In fact, if you try to get rid of someone because they broke Bylaw 6.3, and according to Bylaw 8.5 you have the right to banish them, subject, of course, to Bylaw 9.2b, you'll probably regret it. Many troublesome people (or their friends) will delight in scrutinizing your Bylaws and finding loopholes, inconsistencies, different interpretations, etc. You'll end up arguing over the Bylaws even more than you argued over their initial obnoxious behavior! You're trying to END the problems, remember?

So what you do is simply make it clear, in polite, general, non-threatening language, that your group doesn't care for the way they act and doesn't want them to be a part of the group. End of story. What are they going to do? Sue you to make you like them?

That's awfully rude, isn't it?

Maybe it's a little rude to tell someone you don't like them (or to be more PC, you don't like their behavior), but it's true. And they were being far more rude to you or you wouldn't be resorting to this. Yes, it's a little harsh, but it's quick and far less painful than any other method we've tried.

Will that be the end of it?

Yes, if you're really lucky. But lots of times, you'll hear more from them. If they send you a blistering email telling you what you can do with your %\$#@! group and what a terrible leader you are, you got off easy. At the other end of the extreme are people who will bad-mouth you every chance they get, on every public list they can. You may have to defend yourself from some of these attacks and tell your side of the story. But I urge you to do so with the utmost restraint and brevity. Then ignore their counter-strike. If your group was right and they really are the problem, other people will see that, too. The weed will be known for what they are and will be shunned and banned by others. Everyone has had experience with this type of person, and they will sympathize with you. Have some faith in yourself and your group and in the good wishes of others in our community. It'll all blow over.

A little preventive medicine

It might not hurt to put a clause in your Bylaws that makes it clear that you will not tolerate disruptive people at your events. You can also discuss the issue with the whole group and make a group decision that you will tell disruptive individuals that they are not welcome. It might have a preventive effect on some potentially troublesome people, and if not, at least they were warned.

Conclusion

There are a good many troubled and troublesome people in the world, and Neopagan groups seem to attract more than our fair share of them. These folks are usually loud, obnoxious, and a constant nuisance to the majority of us that just want to enjoy a smooth-functioning community of like-minded individuals. We have the legal and moral right to form communities that nurture and support us. We have the right to choose our friends. When a particular individual is found to consistently disrupt the harmony of our group, or to cause more trouble than the group is willing to put up with, it is the group's right to exclude that individual from its presence.

And as the leaders of Neopagan groups, we have certain additional duties and obligations: We must be observant of the actions of our members and guests, so we will notice disruptive behavior early, rather than late. We must listen carefully to the words of people in our groups that we trust, because they may be trying to tell us about a disruptive person, in a subtle way. We must try our best to be fair and open-minded so that we don't mislabel a person as disruptive, just because they happen to disagree with a certain policy or decision or don't get along with a certain individual. And finally, when we become convinced that a person is truly a "weed", we must act swiftly and surely to remove them from our garden.



Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia,

Copied on October 17, 2008

The [triple spiral](#) is one of the main symbols of Celtic Reconstructionism^[1]

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (CR) is a [polytheistic](#), [animistic](#), [religious](#) and [cultural](#) movement. It is an effort to reconstruct and revive, in a [modern Celtic](#) cultural context, [pre-Christian Celtic religions](#).

Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism originated in discussions among amateur scholars and [Neopagans](#) in the mid 1980s, and evolved into an independent tradition by the early 1990s. CR represents a [polytheistic reconstructionist](#) approach to [Celtic Neopaganism](#), emphasising historical accuracy over eclecticism such as is found in [Neo-druidry](#). Currently, "Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism" (CR) is an umbrella term, with a number of recognized sub-traditions or denominations.^[2]

Origins

Many of the people who went on to establish CR were involved in Pagan groups in the seventies and eighties. Often these groups contained many Celtic elements that eventually found their way into core CR practice. Much of the dialogue in the 1980s took place at workshops and discussions at Neopagan festivals and gatherings, as well as in the pages of Neopagan publications.^[3] This period, and these groups, are often referred to in retrospect as "Proto-CR".^[4] Later, with the establishment of the Internet in the late eighties and early nineties, many of these Proto-CR, or early CR, groups and individuals came together online. This began a fruitful period of sharing of information and experiences, and led to a rapid growth of the movement.^{[5][3]}

The first appearance in print of the term "Celtic Reconstructionist", used to describe a specific religious movement and not just a style of [Celtic Studies](#), was by Kym Lambert ní Dhoireann in the Spring, 1992 issue of [Harvest Magazine](#).^{[6][7]} Ní Dhoireann credits Kathryn Price NicDhàna with originating the term "Celtic Reconstructionist";^[8] however, NicDhàna credits her early use of the term to a simple

extrapolation of [Margot Adler](#)'s use of the term "[Pagan Reconstructionists](#)" in the original, 1979 edition of *Drawing Down the Moon*.^[9] Though Adler devotes space to a handful of Reconstructionist traditions, none of those mentioned are specifically Celtic.^[10] In chapter eleven, while describing his [Neo-druidic](#) group, New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA), [Isaac Bonewits](#) uses the phrase "Eclectic Reconstructionist."^[11] However, by the time CR became a recognized tradition, this pairing of terms had become oxymoronic, as "Reconstructionism" in the Pagan/polytheist sense had now been defined specifically to exclude "Eclecticism".^{[4][8][12]}

Initially only a few dozen people were involved on the Proto-CR and CR listserves. These included the PODS:CELTIC Echo on PODnet (a [FidoNet](#) network "othernet"), the Celtic and Occult forums on networks like [GEnie](#) and [CompuServe](#), and later Nemeton-L in 1994 (founded and initially moderated by Erynn Rowan Laurie). But over the 1990s many hundreds of individuals and groups gradually joined the discussions online and in print, and the movement became more of an umbrella group, with a number of recognized sub-traditions.^[5]

Practices

Though some CRs do have survivals of Irish or Scottish folkloric customs in their families of origin, CR does not make any claim to being a linear or direct descendant of any intact, completely [polytheistic](#), [ancient Celtic religion](#).^{[4][3]} The polytheistic religions of the ancient Celts were lost or subsumed by [Christianity](#). However, CRs believe there is much to be found in the [living Celtic cultures](#), the [archaeological record](#), and the early manuscripts. Many [folkloric](#) practices never completely died out, and all that is needed in some areas, such as community celebrations, is a bit of dusting off and "back-engineering". Other aspects of ancient Celtic religion are more difficult to reconstruct.^[13]

CRs openly acknowledge that some aspects of their religious practice are, by necessity, modern creations. However, they state that, as much as possible, these practices are based on and inspired by early Celtic beliefs found in early texts and the work of [scholars](#) and archaeologists, and are rooted in an understanding of, and participation in, the living Celtic cultures. Any innovations or elaborations are based upon sound historical precedents. Feedback from other scholars and experienced practitioners is sought before a new practice is accepted as part of the tradition.^[14]

CRs believe it is important to lay aside elements of some ancient Celtic cultures which would be clearly inappropriate practices for a modern society. It is clear that some of those early Celtic societies practiced [human sacrifice](#), [slavery](#), and had strong [patriarchal](#) elements. CRs strive to find ethical ways of integrating their historical findings and research with their daily lives.^[14]

CR is not only about scholarly research. The founders and elders of CR believe that [mystical](#), ecstatic practices are a necessary balance to scholarship, and that this balance is a vital component in determining whether a tradition is CR.^[15] They also believe that participation in, and respect for, the living Celtic cultures is a vital part of the tradition. [Language](#) study and preservation, and participation in other cultural activities such as [Celtic music](#), dance and [martial arts](#) forms, are seen as a core part of the tradition.^{[16][4]}

Celtic Reconstructionists focus their religious reconstruction efforts on a particular Celtic culture, such as the [Gaelic](#), [Welsh](#) or [Gaulish](#). While they believe it is helpful to *study* a wide variety of Celtic cultures as an aid to religious reconstruction, and to have a broad understanding of religion in general, in *practice* these cultures are not lumped together.^[4]

Many CRs view each act of daily life as a form of ritual, accompanying daily acts of purification and protection with traditional, or slightly re-Paganized, prayers, chants and songs from sources such as the [Scottish Gaelic *Carmina Gadelica*](#) or manuscript collections of ancient [Irish](#) or [Welsh poetry](#).^[15] Celebratory, community rituals are usually based on traditional community celebrations as recorded in folkloric collections by authors such as [Marian McNeill](#), [Kevin Danaher](#) or John Gregorson Campbell. These celebrations often involve bonfires, dances, songs, divination and children's games.^[4] More formal

or mystical CR rituals are often based on traditional techniques of interacting with the [Otherworld](#), such as the act of making offerings of food, drink and art to the spirits of the land, ancestral spirits, and the [Celtic deities](#). CR ritual structures are based on the ancient Celtic cosmology of the "Three Realms" - Land, Sea and Sky^[17] - with the fire of inspiration seen as a central force that unites the realms.^[15] These more formal rituals may also involve traditional songs and prayers from the living Celtic cultures as well as ceremonies and visionary techniques reconstructed from older, Polytheistic sources. Mystical practices are usually reconstructions based on accounts in the older manuscripts. Many CRs maintain [altars](#) and [shrines](#) to their patron spirits and deities, often choosing to place them at outdoor, natural locations such as [wells](#), streams, and special trees. Some CRs practice [divination](#). [Ogham](#) is a favored method, as are folkloric customs such as the taking of omens from the shapes of clouds or the behaviour of birds and animals.^{[15][3][4]}

Terminology

NicDhàna and ní Dhoireann have stated that they coined the term "Celtic Reconstructionist / Celtic Reconstructionism (CR)" specifically to distinguish their practices and beliefs from those of [eclectic](#) traditions like [Wicca](#) and the [Neo-Druidry](#) of the time.^{[4][8][18]} With ní Dhoireann's popularization of Celtic Reconstructionism in the Pagan press, and then the use of the term by these individuals and others on the Internet, "Celtic Reconstructionism" began to be adopted as the name for this developing spiritual tradition.^{[19][20][21]}

While Celtic Reconstructionism was the earliest term in use, and still remains the most widespread, as the movement progressed other names for a Celtic Reconstructionist approach were also popularized, with varying degrees of success.^[2]

Pàganachd / Pàgánacht

Some CR groups have looked to Celtic languages for a more culturally specific name for the tradition, or for their branch of the tradition. There are groups who now described their traditions as *Pàganachd* ("Paganism, Heathenism" in [Scottish Gaelic](#))^[15] or the [Irish](#) version, *Pàgánacht*.^{[22][23]} Some [Gaelic-oriented](#) groups use the two terms somewhat interchangeably,^[24] or further modify these terms to describe the CR sub-tradition practiced by their particular group, such as *Pàganachd Allaidh* ("Wild Paganism")^[25] or *Pàganachd Bhandia* ("Paganism of Goddesses"),^{[15][4]} both used by Gaelic Reconstructionist groups on the East Coast of the US.^{[25][15][4]}

Gaelic Traditionalism

Some groups that take a Celtic Reconstructionist approach to Gaelic polytheism call themselves "Gaelic Traditionalists".^[2] While there is agreement that a priority of Celtic Reconstructionism is to preserve the living traditions in Gaelic (and other [Modern Celtic](#)) communities, there has been some controversy around the use of the term "Gaelic Traditionalists" by groups outside of the [Gaeltacht](#) and [Gàidhealtachd](#) areas of Ireland, Scotland and Nova Scotia.^[26] Part of this is due to the fact that most "Gaelic Traditionalists" are actually Christians.^[2] As one of the founders of the Celtic Reconstructionist movement put it, "Gaelic Traditionalists" means "those living and raised in the living cultures and [who] are keeping their culture, language and music alive, not any of the American polytheistic groups that have been using it lately."^[8] Due to those in the Gaelic-speaking areas having a prior claim to the term, some CRs have been uncomfortable with the choice of other reconstructionists to call themselves "traditionalists".^{[26][2]} While this disagreement over terminology has at times led to heated discussion, the polytheistic "traditionalists" and the "reconstructionists" are taking the same approach to their religion, and there are generally good relations between the founders of both movements.^[26]

Senistrogna / Sinnsreachd

In the late 1990s, members of Imbas, a Celtic Reconstructionist organisation based in [Seattle](#), began promoting the name *Senistrognata*,^[27] which they say means "the ancestral customs of the Celtic peoples" in reconstructed [Old Celtic](#).^[28]

In 2006, *An Cónaidhm na dTuath Gaelach*, an American group that does not call themselves CR, began promoting the name *Sinnsreachd* (Scottish Gaelic) or *Sinsearach* (Irish), which they say is the modern Gaelic equivalent of the term. However, *Sinnsreachd* and *Sinsearach* actually mean "ancestry",^{[29][30][31]} "seniority",^[32] or "genealogy".^{[30][32]}

Other

- The Irish word for "polytheism", *Ildiachas*, is in use by at least one group on the West Coast of the US as *Ildiachas Atógtha* ("reconstructed polytheism").^{[27][33]}
- *Aurrad*, which came into use among members of the Nemeton mailing list in the mid 1990s,^[34] means "person of legal standing in the *túath*"^[35] in [Old Irish](#).^[36]

Celtic Reconstructionism and Neo-druidism

Though there has been quite a bit of cross-pollination between [Neo-druid](#) and Celtic Reconstructionist groups, and there is significant crossover of membership between the two movements, the two have somewhat distinct methodologies and goals in their approach to Celtic religious forms. CR practitioners tend to look to the whole cultural matrix in which the religious ideas were formed, while Neo-druids tend to prefer to focus on the specifically [druidic](#) functions. Some Neo-druidic groups claim to be non-religious in nature, which is not the case with most CR groups. There are some CR philosophies which downplay the role of the druidic office specifically in preference to a more general view of Indo-European priesthood (making the argument that the druids may simply have been a very successful school of priest-craft, and possibly not even completely pan-Celtic), or to the successors of druids such as the [filí](#) and seanachies.^[15]

This is not to say that there is no connection between Neo-druid groups and CR. Some Neo-druid groups (notably, [Ár nDraíocht Féin](#) (ADF), the [Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids](#) (OBOD), and Keltria) have similar methodologies of reconstruction, at least some of the time, or have taken up CR methodologies recently. ADF, in particular, has long used CR-type techniques, but many CRs criticize them for their pan-Indo-European scope, which may result in unusual combinations such as "[Vedic](#) druids" and "[Roman](#) druids".^[37]

Some philosophical differences exist as well, especially in terms of what "druid" means. Some Neo-druidic groups call anyone with an interest in Celtic Spirituality a "druid", and refer to the practice of Celtic spirituality as "druidry", while CR groups usually use the older definition, seeing it as an office that requires decades of training and experience, which is only attained by a small number of practitioners, and which must be conferred and confirmed by the community the druid serves.^{[38][39]}

Despite these differences, there are generally good relations between Neo-druid and CR groups, with, as noted previously, a great deal of sharing of ideas and even memberships.^[40]

References

1. [^] Bonewits, Isaac (2006) *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*. New York, Kensington Publishing Group [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#). p.132: [Among Celtic Reconstructionists] "...*An Thribhis Mhòr* (the great triple spiral) came into common use to refer to the three realms." Also p. 134: [On CRs] "Using Celtic symbols such as [triskeles](#) and [spirals](#)"
2. [^] [a b c d e](#) Bonewits (2006) p.137: "There are, by the way, groups of people who call themselves "Gaelic Traditionalists" who have a great deal in common with the Celtic Recons. Some of these GTs started off as CRs, but consider themselves different for some reason or another (usually political). Others are Catholics looking to restore old (but Christian) Gaelic customs. ... The key with understanding these terms, or others such as Celtic Restorationism, Neo-Celtism, *Senistrognata*, *Seandagnatha*, *Ildiachas/Iol-Diadhachas*, etc. is to find out what each person using them intends them to mean."
3. [^] [a b c d](#) Laurie, Erynn; Kathryn NicDhàna, Aedh Rua Ó Mórríghan, Kym ní Dhoireann, John Machate (August 2003). "[Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism](#)" (HTML). WitchVox. Retrieved on [2007-11-05](#).

4. ^{^ a b c d e f g h i j} Varn, C. Derick (December 2006). [""An Interview with Kathryn Price NicDhàna: Celtic Reconstructionism""](#) (HTML). The Green Triangle. Retrieved on [2006-12-09](#).
5. ^{^ a b} Bonewits (2006) p.131, "The Celtic Reconstructionist (CR) movement among Pagans began in the 1980s, with discussions among amateur scholars in the pages of Pagan publications or on the computer bulletin boards of the pre-Internet days. In the early 1990s, the term began to be used for those interested in seriously researching and recreating authentic Celtic beliefs and practices for modern Pagans."
6. [^] Lambert, Kym [K.L. ní Dhoireann] (1992) "Celtic God/Goddess Names", *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 4, Spring Equinox 1992, pp. 11-12. First use of "Celtic Reconstructionist" as tradition name.
7. [^] Lambert, Kym [K.L. ní Dhoireann] (1992) Book Reviews, Bio Blurbs, *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 5, Beltane 1992, pp. 6,8. Continued use of "Celtic Reconstructionist" and "Celtic Reconstructionism". Use of term continued in succeeding issues for full publication run of magazine.
8. ^{^ a b c d} Varn, C. D. (February 2007). [""An Interview with Kym Lambert""](#) (HTML). The Green Triangle. Retrieved on [2007-02-04](#).
9. [^] Theatana, Kathryn [K.P. NicDhàna] (1992) "More on Names", *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 3, Imbolc 1992, pp. 11-12. On need to reconstruct traditions of ancestral [Celtic] deities and avoid [cultural appropriation](#).
10. [^] [Adler, Margot](#) (1979) *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Boston, Beacon Press [ISBN 0-8070-3237-9](#). Chapter 9: Religions from the Past--The Pagan Reconstructionists.
11. [^] Adler (1979) Chapter 11: Religions of Paradox and Play, p.303, Bonewits on New Reformed Druids of North America (NRDNA) as "Eclectic Reconstructionist".
12. [^] McColman (2003) p.51: "Such reconstructionists are attempting, through both spiritual and scholarly means, to create as purely Celtic a spirituality as possible."
13. [^] McColman, Carl (2003) *Complete Idiot's Guide to Celtic Wisdom*. Alpha Press [ISBN 0-02-864417-4](#). p.12: "Some groups have gone even further, trying to use archaeology, religious history, [comparative mythology](#), and even the study of non-Celtic [Indo-European](#) religions in an effort to create a well-researched and scholarly "reconstruction" of the ancient Celts."
14. ^{^ a b} Bonewits, Isaac (2006) *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*. New York, Kensington Publishing Group [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#). p.132
15. ^{^ a b c d e f g h} Erynn Rowan Laurie, Aedh Rua O'Morrighu, John Machate, Kathryn Price Theatana, Kym Lambert ní Dhoireann, *Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism*, in: Telesco, Patricia [editor] (2005) *Which Witch is Which?* Franklin Lakes, NJ, New Page Books / The Career Press [ISBN 1-56414-754-1](#), p. 85-9.
16. [^] McColman (2003) p.51: "Many Celtic reconstructionists stress the importance of learning a Celtic language, like Irish or Welsh,"
17. [^] Mac Mathúna, Liam (1999) ["Irish Perceptions of the Cosmos"](#) *Celtica* vol. 23 (1999), pp.174-187
18. [^] McColman (2003) p.51: "While Celtic shamanism and [Celtic Wicca](#) are popular, not all people interested in finding a nature-based expression of Celtic spirituality feel comfortable with these multicultural forms of spirituality. A small but dedicated group of people, mostly neopagans, have formed a vibrant community in recent years devoted to reconstructing ancient Celtic pagan spirituality for the modern world."
19. [^] Darcie (1992) "Book Review", *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 5, Beltane 1992, p. 8. Use of term by another writer: "I showed the Appendix to a Celtic reconstructionist friend..."
20. [^] Hinds, Kathryn (1992) "Letters", *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 6, Summer 1992, p. 11. Use of term by a letter writer: "I am very curious about Kym Lambert's experiences, and I hope she will write more about her path of Celtic reconstructionism."
21. [^] Lambert, Kym [K.L. ní Dhoireann] (1992) "Reviewers' Biographies", *Harvest*, Southboro, MA, Vol. 12, No. 8, Fall/Autumn Equinox 1992, p. 10. Use of term in bio blurb: "Kym Lambert is...now practicing Celtic Reconstructionism..."
22. [^] NicDhàna, Kathryn; Raven nic Rhóisin (October 2007). [""I Stand with Tara: A Celtic Reconstructionist \(Págánacht\) ritual for the protection of the sacred center: the Tara-Skryne Valley in Ireland.""](#) (HTML). paganachd.com agus paganacht.com. Retrieved on [2007-10-26](#).
23. [^] ["Gaul Naofa: Gaelic Reconstructionist Polytheism"](#). www.gaulnaofa.org. Retrieved on [2008-05-05](#).
24. [^] ["Págánachd/Págánacht"](#) (HTML). paganachd.com agus paganacht.com (2006). Retrieved on [2007-10-26](#).
25. ^{^ a b} ní Dhoireann, Kym (2007). ["Our Scottish Reconstructionist Path v. 3.0: Págánachd Allaidh"](#) (HTML). cyberpict.net. Retrieved on [2007-10-26](#).
26. ^{^ a b c} NicDhàna, Kathryn Price; Erynn Rowan Laurie, C. Lee Vermeers, Kym Lambert ní Dhoireann, *et al* [August 2007]. *The CR FAQ - An Introduction to Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism*, first, River House Publishing, pp.134-6. [ISBN 978-0-6151-5800-6](#).
27. ^{^ a b} Bonewits, Isaac (2006) *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*. New York, Kensington Publishing Group [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#). p.137
28. [^] [""Imbas""](#) (HTML). imbas.org (2000). Retrieved on [2007-10-26](#).
29. [^] Robertson, Boyd; Ian McDonald [2004]. *Gaelic Dictionary*. Hodder Education, Teach Yourself Series, p.106. [ISBN 0-07-142667-1](#).
30. ^{^ a b} MacLennan, Malcolm [1991]. *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language*. Edinburgh: Acair/Aberdeen University Press, p.300. [ISBN 0-08-025712-7](#).
31. [^] MacBain, Alexander [1998]. *Etymological Dictionary of Scottish-Gaelic*. Hippocrene Books, Inc. New York, NY, p.323. [ISBN 0-7818-0632-1](#).
32. ^{^ a b} Ó Dónaill, Niall [1992]. *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*. Éireann: Mount Salus Press, p.1096. [ISBN 1-85791-037-0](#).
33. [^] NicDhàna *et al.* [August 2007] p.177
34. [^] Machate, John (1995). ["Aurrad: Old Faith in a Modern World"](#) (HTML). thunderpaw.com. Retrieved on [2007-10-26](#).
35. [^] Kelly, Fergus (1988) *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies [ISBN 0-901282-95-2](#). p.304
36. [^] Kelly, Fergus (1988) *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies [ISBN 0-901282-95-2](#). p.323 "petty kingdom, territory, tribe; the laity"
37. [^] Bonewits (2006) Chapter 9, "Solitary Druids and Celtic Reconstructionists" pp.128-140.

38. [^ Bonewits \(2006\) p.135](#): "But because the word druid is used by so many people for so many different purposes, Celtic Recons, even those who get called druids by their own communities, are reluctant to use the title for fear that others will equate them with folks they consider flakes, frauds or fools."
39. [^ Greer, John Michael \(2003\) *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult*](#). St. Paul, Llewellyn Worldwide. [ISBN 1-5671-8336-0](#). pp.139,140,410.
40. [^ Bonewits, Isaac \(2006\) *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*](#). New York, Kensington Publishing Group [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#). pp.118,120,125,130,131

Further reading

Celtic Reconstructionism

- Adler, Margot (1979) *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*
- [Bonewits, Isaac](#) (2006) *Bonewits's Essential Guide to Druidism*. New York, Kensington Publishing Group [ISBN 0-8065-2710-2](#) Chapter 9: "Celtic Reconstructionists and other Nondruiddic Druids"
- Fairgrove, Rowan (1994) *What we don't know about the ancient Celts*. Originally printed in *The Pomegranate*, **2**. Now [available online](#)
- Kondratiev, Alexei (1998) *The Apple Branch: A Path to Celtic Ritual*. San Francisco, Collins. [ISBN 1-898256-42-X](#) (1st edition), [ISBN 0-806-52502-9](#) (2nd edition) [also reprinted without revision under the title Celtic Rituals]
- Laurie, Erynn Rowan (1995) *A Circle of Stones: Journeys and Meditations for Modern Celts*. Chicago, Eschaton. [ISBN 1-57353-106-5](#)
- Laurie, Erynn Rowan (2007) *Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom*. Megalithica Books. [ISBN 1905713029](#)
- McColman, Carl (2003) *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Celtic Wisdom*. Alpha Press [ISBN 0-02-864417-4](#)
- NicDhàna, Kathryn Price; Erynn Rowan Laurie, C. Lee Vermeers, Kym Lambert ni Dhoireann, *et al.* (2007) *The CR FAQ - An Introduction to Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism*. River House Publishing. [ISBN 978-0-6151-5800-6](#)
- Telesco, Patricia [editor] (2005) *Which Witch is Which?* Franklin Lakes, NJ, New Page Books / The Career Press [ISBN 1-56414-754-1](#), p. 85-9: "Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism"

Celtic polytheism and folklore

Further information: [Celtic polytheism](#), [Irish mythology](#), [Scottish mythology](#), and [Welsh mythology](#)

Celtic Reconstructionists rely on primary mythological texts, as well as surviving folklore, for the basis of their religious practices. No list can completely cover all the recommended works, but this is a small sample of sources used.

General Celtic

- [Evans Wentz, W. Y.](#) (1966, 1990) *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*. Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe Humanities Press [ISBN 0-901072-51-6](#)
- MacCana, Proinsias (1970) *Celtic Mythology*. Middlesex, Hamlyn. [ISBN 0-600-00647-6](#)
- MacKillop, James (1998) *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. [ISBN 0-19-280120-1](#)
- Rees, Alwyn and Brinley (1961) *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales*. New York, Thames and Hudson. [ISBN 0-500-27039-2](#)
- Sjoestedt, Marie-Louise (1982) *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*. Translated by Myles Dillon, Berkeley, CA, Turtle Island Foundation. [ISBN 0-913666-52-1](#)

Gaelic (Irish and Scottish)

- Campbell, John Gregorson (1900, 1902, 2005) *The Gaelic Otherworld*. Edited by Ronald Black. Edinburgh, Birlinn Ltd. [ISBN 1-84158-207-7](#)
- Carmichael, Alexander (1992) *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations (with illustrative notes on wards, rites, and customs dying and obsolete/ orally collected in the highlands and islands of Scotland by Alexander Carmichael)*. Hudson, NY, Lindisfarne. [ISBN 0-940262-50-9](#)
- Clark, Rosalind (1991) *The Great Queens: Irish Goddesses from the Morrigan to Cathleen ni Houlihan*. Savage, MD, Barnes and Noble Books. [ISBN 0-389-20928-7](#)
- [Danaher, Kevin](#) (1972) *The Year in Ireland*. Dublin, Mercier. [ISBN 1-85635-093-2](#)
- Dillon, Myles (1994) *Early Irish Literature*. Dublin, Four Courts Press. [ISBN 1-85182-117-5](#)
- Gray, Elizabeth A (1982) *Cath Maige Tuired: The 2nd Battle of Mag Tuired*. Dublin, Irish Texts Society
- [McNeill, F. Marian](#) (1959). *The Silver Bough, Vol. 1-4*. Glasgow, William MacLellan
- Nagy, Joseph Falaky (1985) *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition*. Berkely, University of California Press. [ISBN 0-520-05284-6](#)
- Patterson, Nerys Thomas (1994) *Cattle Lords and Clansmen: The Social Structure of Early Ireland*. Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press (2nd edition) [ISBN 0-268-00800-0](#)
- Power, Patrick C. (1976) *Sex and Marriage in Ancient Ireland*. Dublin, Mercier

- Smyth, Daragh (1988, 1996) *A Guide to Irish Mythology*. Dublin, Irish Academic Press
- Walsh, Brian (2002) *The Secret Commonwealth and the Fairy Belief Complex*. USA, Xlibris [ISBN 1-4010-5545-1](#)

Comparative European

- Davidson, H.R. Ellis (1988) *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions*. Syracuse, Syracuse University Press. [ISBN 0-8156-2441-7](#)
- Epstein, Angelique Gulermovich (1998) *War Goddess: The Morrigan and Her Germano-Celtic Counterparts*. Los Angeles, University of California
- Lincoln, Bruce (1991) *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. [ISBN 0-226-48200-6](#)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_Reconstructionist_Paganism"

Categories: [Celtic studies](#) | [Celts](#) | [Neopagan traditions](#) | [Polytheism](#)

Hidden categories: [All articles with unsourced statements](#) | [Articles with unsourced statements since September 2008](#)

-
- This page was last modified on 13 October 2008, at 00:55.
 - All text is available under the terms of the [GNU Free Documentation License](#). (See [Copyrights](#) for details.)
 - Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a U.S. registered [501\(c\)\(3\) tax-deductible nonprofit charity](#).



Songs about Candles

- This Little Light of Mine
- Melanie, "Lay Down (Candles in the Rain)"
- Stan Rogers "Song of the candle"
- Candle for Durruti
- "Light one candle" PP and M.
- "A Single Candle" - Chris Stuart
- " Bell, Book & Candle" - Boo Hewerdine
- Dave Moore, " The Third Candle I Burnt Tonight", Over My Shoulder
- Robin Greenstein has one on her last cd..staying up all night..Blow The Candle Out and The Owner's Daughter
- Project Mercury - Family of strangers - Light This Candle -
- IIRD Tyme Out - Candle in the Wind (this is not the Elton John song)
- Richard Julian / Trick Candle / Good Life ...
- "Let The Candle Burn" by Natalie Brown,
- Stuart Markus - Candle in my Hands
- Indigo Girls--Let It Be Me (Not so much about candles, but thematically appropriate and there is the line "shine my life like a light")

QUOTE CORNER

On COMMUNITY

Taken from various green books
at www.geocities.com/mikerdna/arda.html

Company (Green 2, Irish)

If you lie down with dogs you'll rise with fleas
The loneliest man is the man who is lonely in a crowd.
Talk to yourself rather than to bad companions.
If you want to be with the company you'll call it good company
Don't keep company with your betters. You won't like them and they won't like you.
There's no war as bitter as a war between friends.
The best way to make friends is to meet often. The best way to keep them is to meet seldom.
Choose your friend among the wise, and your wife among the virtuous.
Friendship multiplies our joys, and divides our grief.
Hearts may agree, though heads differ.

Proverbs on Cooperation and Contentment (Green 2, African)

When the right hand washes the left and the left hand washes the right, then both hands will be clean.
Good fellowship is sharing good things with friends.
The string can be useful until a rope can be found.

Community and Conversation (Green 3, Quotes)

In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity. -Richard Baxter
The basket that has two handles can be carried by two. -Egyptian
Eat according to your taste, and dress according to the taste of others. -Moorish
Two are an army against one. -Icelandic
The avalanche has already started. It is too late for the pebbles to vote. -Unknown
Man can do without his friends but not without his neighbors. -Egyptian
Better a neighbor over the wall than a brother over the sea. -Albanian
Choose the neighbor before the house and the companion before the road. -Moorish
Argument is the worst sort of conversation. -Jonathan Swift
Without conversation there is no agreement. -Montenegrin
"Yes and No" make a long quarrel. -Icelandic
Faults are thick where love is thin. -Welsh
The faultfinder will find faults even in paradise. -Henry Thoreau
Real progress is made not by the loud, ostentatious, push majorities, but always by small and obstinate minorities. -Henry Skolimowski
Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor's noisy party than being there. -Franklin Jones
Whether women are better than men I cannot say, but I can say they are certainly no worse. -Golda Meir
Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction. -Antoine de Saint Exupery

An old southern Methodist Preacher was asked if there is a difference between union and unity. He replied, "You can tie two cats' tails together and throw them over a clothes line, in which case you have union, but not unity." -W.T. Purkeson

Always forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much.- Oscar Wilde

Custom, Justice and Law (Green 3, Quotes)

An agreement will break a custom. -Welsh

Men do more from custom than from reason. -Latin

Custom and law are neighbors. -Montenegrin

The slogans must be rejected and the complexities recognized. -Michael Harrington

A good catchword can obscure analysis for fifty years. -Wendall Willkie

History shows that men and nations behave reasonably only when they have exhausted all other alternatives. - Abba Eban

The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken. -Samuel Johnson

Originality is the art of concealing your source. -Franklin Jones

There is nothing new under the sun. -Ecclesiastes 1:9

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other. -Eric Hoffer

We despair of changing the habits of men, still we would like to alter institutions, the habits of millions of men. -George Iles

Equality in injustice is justice.- Egyptian

The more a man knows, the more he forgives. -Italian

He who is accustomed to evil is offended by good. -Mexican

To an unjust government, a martyr is more dangerous than a rebel. -Italian

Everyone should be allowed to keep his natural clothes, his natural food, and his natural religion. -German

Justice flees the world because no one will give it shelter in his house. -Maltese

Moral decisions are always easy to recognize. They are where you abandon self-interest. -Rev. Mother Superior Darwi Odrade, *DUNE*

Every judgment teeters on the brink of error. To claim absolute knowledge is to become monstrous. Knowledge is an unending adventure at the edge of uncertainty. -Leto Atreides II, *DUNE*

Before I judge my neighbour, let me walk a mile in his moccasins. -Sioux

I am free of all prejudices. I hate every one equally.- W.C. Fields

Law separates, compromise conciliates. -German

Treat all men alike. Give them all the same laws. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. -Chief Joseph

Laws are spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little one get caught. -Russian

Fear not the law, but the judge. -Russian

Thieves increase with the making of new laws. -Romanian

Custom is stronger than law. -Russian

First, we kill all the lawyers...- Shakespeare?

Harken to the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. -Jesus

The test of courage comes when we are in the minority; the test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority. -Henry David Thoreau

Most people would rather defend to the death your right to say it than listen to it. -Robert Brault

One lawyer in a town will languish, two lawyers will prosper. -Sam Adams, RDNA

The successful revolutionary is a statesman, the unsuccessful one a criminal. -Erich Fromm

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. -Edmund Burke

When the system defines our choices, it channels rebellion into modes that it is prepared to control, into acts that harm the rebel, not the system. -Starhawk

Laws to suppress tend to strengthen what they would prohibit. This is the fine point on which all legal professions of history have based their job security. -Bene Gesserit Coda, *DUNE*

Community & Communication (Green 4, Native)

All children of Earth will be welcome at our council fires. -Seneca

The more you give, the more good things come to you. -Hopi

Give your host a little something when you leave; little presents are little courtesies and never offend. -Seneca

Always assume your guest is tired, cold, and hungry, and act accordingly. -Navaho

Never help a person who doesn't help anybody else. -Hopi

The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well. -Ojibway

The bird who has eaten cannot fly with the bird that is hungry. -Omaha

One finger cannot lift a pebble. -Hopi

What should it matter that one bowl is dark and the other pale, if each is of good design and serves its purpose well? -Hopi

A people without a history is like the wind over buffalo grass. -Sioux

A people without faith in themselves cannot survive. -Hopi

Be satisfied with needs instead of wants. -Teton Sioux

You are never justified in arguing. -Hopi

An angry word is like striking with a knife. -Hopi

If I am in harmony with my family, that's success. -Ute

It is good to tell one's heart. -Chippewa

Remember that your children are not your own, but are lent to you by the Creator. -Mohawk

It takes a whole village to raise a child. -Omaha

You can't get rich if you look after your relatives properly. -Navajo

One foe is too many and a hundred friends too few. -Hopi

A man or woman with many children has many homes. -Lakota

Never see an old person going to carry water without getting a bucket and going in their stead. -Twanas

Do not wrong or hate your neighbor, for it is not he that you wrong but yourself. -Pima

I have been to the end of the earth. I have been to the end of the waters. I have been to the end of the sky. I have been to the end of the mountains. I have found none that are not my friends. -Navajo

The Community of Rats (Green 4, African)

Once upon a time there was a community of rats in a certain African village. In one particular house a big and mean cat terrorized the rats. They decided to work together and build a small but strong hole that they could easily enter, but the bigger cat couldn't. After finishing and testing the hole the rats were very pleased by their teamwork and cooperation together. But then at a community meeting one rat said: "The cat himself can't go into the hole but he can still catch us as we enter and leave the hole. Who is going to tie a bell around the cat's neck to warn us when he is approaching?" Everyone was silent. All were afraid. While they succeeded in building the hole together, no one was ready to sacrifice himself or herself to tie the bell. (Folktale told by different storytellers in Eastern Africa)

The Watermelon Hunter (Green 4, Sufi)

Once upon a time there was a man who strayed, from his own country, into the world known as the Land of Fools.

He soon saw a number of people flying in terror from a field where they had been trying to reap wheat. 'There is a monster in that field,' they told him. He looked, and saw that it was a water-melon.

He offered to kill the 'monster' for them. When he had cut the melon from its stalk, he took a slice and began to eat it. The people became even more terrified of him than they had been of the melon. They drove him away with pitchforks, crying: 'He will kill us next, unless we get rid of him.'

It so happened that at another time another man also strayed into the Land of Fools, and the same thing started to happen to him. But, instead of offering to help them with the 'monster', he agreed with them that it must be dangerous, and by tiptoeing away from it with them he gained their confidence. He spent a long time with them in their houses until he could teach them, little by little, the basic facts which would enable them not only to lose their fear of melons, but even to cultivate them themselves.

BARD IN REVIEW



John Denver

A great singer, well loved at Carleton folksinging groups.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

http://1globalpark.com/jdmidipage/john_denver/rockymtn1.mid for the music

He was born in the summer of his 27th year
Comin' home to a place he'd never been before
He left yesterday behind him, you might say he was born again
You might say he found a key for every door

When he first came to the mountains his life was far away
On the road and hangin' by a song
But the string's already broken and he doesn't really care
It keeps changin' fast and it don't last for long

But the Colorado Rocky Mountain high

I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky

The shadow from the starlight is softer than a lullabye

Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado) Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado)

He climbed cathedral mountains, he saw silver clouds below
He saw everything as far as you can see

And they say he got crazy once, and he tried to touch the sun

And he lost a friend but kept his memory

Now he walks in quiet solitude the forests and the streams
Seeking grace in every step he takes

His sight has turned inside himself to try and understand
The serenity of a clear blue mountain lake

And the Colorado Rocky Mountain high

I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky

You can talk to God and listen to the casual reply

Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado) Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado)

Now his life is full of wonder but his heart still knows some fear

Of a simple thing he cannot comprehend

Why they try to tear the mountains down to bring in a couple more

More people, more scars upon the land

And the Colorado Rocky Mountain high

I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky

I know he'd be a poorer man if he never saw an eagle fly

Rocky Mountain high

It's a Colorado Rocky Mountain high

I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky

Friends around the campfire and everybody's high

Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado) Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado)

Rocky Mountain high (high Colorado) Rocky Mountain high do de do

ANNIE'S SONG

http://1globalpark.com/jdmidipage/john_denver/annies.mid for the music

You fill up my senses

like a night in the forest

like the mountains in springtime,

like a walk in the rain

like a storm in the desert,

like a sleepy blue ocean

you fill up my senses,

come fill me again.

Come let me love you,

let me give my life to you

let me drown in your laughter,

let me die in your arms

let me lay down beside you,

let me always be with you

come let me love you,

come love me again.

You fill up my senses

like a night in the forest
like the mountains in springtime,
like a walk in the rain
like a sleepy blue ocean
you fill up my senses,
come fill me again

RHYMES AND REASON

http://1globalpark.com/jdmidpage/john_denver/rhyme.mid For the MUSIC

So you speak to me of sadness
And the coming of the winter
Fear that is within you now
It seems to never end
And the dreams that have escaped you
And the hope that you've forgotten
You tell me that you need me now
You want to be my friend

And you wonder where we're going
Where's the rhyme and where's the reason
And it's you who cannot accept
It is here we must begin
To seek the wisdom of the children
And the graceful way of flowers in the wind

CHORUS:

For the children and the flowers
Are my sisters and my brothers

Their laughter and their loveliness
Could clear a cloudy day

Like the music of the mountains
And the colours of the rainbow
They're a promise of the future
And a blessing for today
Though the cities start to crumble
And the towers fall around us
The sun is slowly fading
And it's colder than the sea

It is written from the desert
To the mountains they shall lead us
By the hand and by the heart
They will comfort you and me
In their innocence and trusting
They will teach us to be free

CHORUS:

For the children and the flowers
Are my sisters and my brothers
Their laughter and their loveliness
Could clear a cloudy day

And the song that I am singing
Is a prayer to non believers
Come and stand beside us
We can find a better way



News Articles



Druid Wars in Britain

Submitted by Ellen Hopman in a mailing to me.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1127430/Druid-wars-How-drunken-row-4-000-year-old-bones-causing-chaos-pagan-circles.html>

Druid wars: How a drunken row over 4,000-year-old bones is causing chaos in pagan circles

The last time I met King Arthur Uther Pendragon - at a summer solstice ceremony at

Stonehenge - he was staggering about blind drunk, sword in one hand, warm can of Stella in the other, his long white robes rather worse for wear.

He proudly told me that he had loads of children, but couldn't remember exactly how many - 'the King's a bit of a tart, you see' - and very thoughtfully invited me to join his harem if I 'fancied a bit'. He then made a great show of pretending to grab my right breast.

So as I park on a stretch of muddy grass next to his very small and tatty caravan which overlooks the famous pagan site, I am a little nervous.

Not just because he's a randy old lush, but because he has a pretty fearsome reputation as a self-styled warrior, political activist, new age militant, very enthusiastic demonstrator - he's camped out here on some sort of protest about the Stonehenge Visitor Centre - and Battle chieftain of the Council of British Druid Orders, or COBDO.

Happily, this year, he's sober (if very keen to get down the pub) and extraordinarily chatty, with a tendency to ramble.

'I'm a spiritual warrior. I'm here to bang heads together to get everyone on the same side and I'm prepared to fight for what I believe in. . .

'Like this huge row over the skeletons - don't whatever you do listen to that other bunch of idiots who make up COBDO West. No one bothers with them, I'm Battle chieftain, I decide the policy and what I say goes - I think we should let those who lay at rest, stay at rest. You wouldn't want someone digging up your grandma from the churchyard, would you?'

It's difficult to know where to start...

The 'skeletons' are the 4,000-year-old remains of a young girl called 'Charlie' and seven other sets of prehistoric bones, excavated near the ancient stone circle in Avebury, Wiltshire, and now on display at the Alexander Keiller Museum in the village.

The 'row' concerns a small breakaway group of druids (known to some as COBDO West) who've requested the museum release the remains so they can rebury them where they came from. King Arthur and mainstream COBDO want the same thing - but are upset that COBDO West have taken matters into their own hands. 'COBDO West are just a joke - three men and a dog, without even the dog,' splutters King Arthur. 'I've got thousands of members in my Arthurian War Band all round the world and loads more in the UK. I could field hundreds of activists at the drop of a hat. Bunch of idiots.'

Gosh. Silly me, I thought druids were just a bunch of tree-huggers who wore flowing robes, paid homage to the sun and were full of peace and love. I couldn't be more wrong. Because the Council of British Druid Orders is at war.

Or, more accurately, a few key members are at war, after a punch-up in a pub and a horribly acrimonious split back in 2006.

Today, no one seems able to remember exactly what it was all about but for the past two years, they've been busy slinging mud, insults and the odd fist at each other.

On one side is my old friend King Arthur, an ex-soldier, ex-builder and ex-Hell's Angel who changed his name by deed poll to King Arthur Uther Pendragon in 1976. He sports long grey locks, a big grizzly beard and a slew of tattoos.

On his `team' are Rollo Maughfling, alias the Elder Arch Druid of Stonehenge, and his COBDO supporters.

On the other, the breakaway COBDO West, is Paul Davies, Druid Chief Reburials Officer, who lives on a narrow boat in Bath and started all this fuss about the skeletons, and the very hirsute Archdruid of Exmoor, who merely identifies himself as `Steve'. The latter, now 53, is teetotal and claims King Arthur is a drunken, self-invented, aggressive fraud who has a nasty tendency to throw up in sacred circles and is a hazard with his faithful sword - `I've seen him wave it about when he's p***ed and nearly decapitate people.'

`A lot of people are embarrassed by it all - very embarrassed,' says Emma Restall Orr, a druidic teacher and priestess from Warwick-shire. `They're feisty, burly lads who are very much on the edge of druidism but are rowing in public and giving druids a bad name.'

And there are an awful lot of druids out there - according to Professor Ronald Hutton (a leading authority on paganism) there are more than 10,000 in the UK. There are countless cults, covens and orders, and with meetings (or moots) just as likely to be down the pub now as in a moonlit wood, this 9,000-year-old branch of paganism is becoming more and more mainstream.

But the definition of druidism is also pretty vague. It has been described alternately as the `nature religion of Albion'; `the sacredness of the earth and nature and all living things'; and a `natural spiritualism'.

Terry Dobney has been a druid for 50 years and has been Chief Druid and Keeper of the Stones at Avebury for the past 11. He wears long white robes and an antler on his belt, clasps a hazel staff and has a rook's feather in his cap.

`Druids are supposed to have a balanced view and see both sides of the argument,' he explains. `But there are some strong egotistical characters who need keeping in check. We're drawing up a code of conduct for being a druid.'

`There are very few actual time-served druids. It takes a minimum of 21 years before you can call yourself a druid.'

According to Terry, it starts with a year and a day learning all the ceremonies with a mentor druid. The next seven practising what you've learned - `it's an oral tradition, so you're not supposed to write it down'. Seven more dressed in blue, getting a handle on the poetry and music. And, finally, the white robes and a political role.

Which, if you believe King Arthur as he sits nursing a pint of Strongbow in the pub with his girlfriend Kazz, 49, is where he is now.

`I work out the political tactics for the druids. My order is the political arm. We're the guys in white frocks, up the trees. We're the ones trying to stop the Newbury by-pass.'

Hasn't that been open for a few years?

`Whatever - we're at the sharp end. We're the political arm of the whole spiritual movement.'

But it's tricky to get a handle on what this lot actually believe in. Terry's take is: `We're born, we reproduce if we're lucky, and we die. I certainly don't believe in any sort of goddess.'

For the Archdruid of Exmoor it's all about helping and healing, though he dismisses Terry's 21-year druidic training scheme as `a complete load of rubbish - no need to take any notice of that because every druid is different'.

Paul Davies, for example, says: `It's all about respecting nature as a living being, and beauty and power and love of nature - the ceremonies help us become part of nature and the local landscape.'

King Arthur, meanwhile, seems more preoccupied with his passport, which he produces in the pub. 'Look - look! I'm the only subject of Her Majesty the Queen who is allowed to wear a crown on his passport photo!'

There does seem to be a certain lack of spiritualism among some Council members.

Which is a terrible shame for the rest of Britain's druids, quietly getting on with their lives, planting trees, performing ceremonies and trying their utmost to live at one with nature.

And finally, the skeletons - what's that all about?

Paul Davies kindly explains. 'It's very simple. Christian remains are automatically reburied if they are exhumed for any reason and it seems reasonable that non- Christians should have the same rights.'

Which, on the face of it, seems pretty reasonable. Indeed, pretty much the only sensible thing I've heard all day and the only thing they all seem to agree on.

Meanwhile, back in his local, I buy King Arthur another pint and make my farewells to him and Kazz.

'Sorry about the summer solstice,' he mutters. 'It's always quite a long night,' adds Kazz, diplomatically.



Playing Games for Singles

📍 It's Saturday night at PlayDate in Atlanta, Georgia, where 400 adults have gathered to play games, drink and socialize.

"It's not your usual bar scene where I look good, you look good, I'm scared to talk to you," Hayes says as he scans a giant Jenga tower for the right block to pull. "You'll talk to anyone when you're playing games, because you're trying to beat them."

Next to Hayes, Brown watches a rambunctious game of Pictionary while a twosome fights it out with Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots nearby. Across the room, Lucas joins her friends in a game of Trouble. And on the dance floor, Imari Havard is hula-hooping with some ladies.

Havard is the co-founder of Timeless Entertainment Concepts, host of

[PlayDate](#), with Ryan Hill and Ronald Gaither.

Timeless' mission is clear: provide a fun alternative to the typical nightlife scene for an entrance fee of just \$10 per person. In other words, if you're looking for love in all the wrong places, try a game of Hungry Hungry Hippos.


PlayDate began in Atlanta in 2005 and has slowly expanded from a monthly crowd of 80 to 500 twice a month in nine cities across the nation. The three men hope to start affiliates in another 20 markets this year.

"It's a pretty simple word-of-mouth advertising," Havard says of how they've made PlayDate so popular. "The No. 1 question asked on a Monday morning, is 'How was your weekend?' The number two most popular question is 'What did you do?' Well, we've built our entire program around answering those questions."

While Gaither takes care of the legal and administrative aspects, Hill and Havard attend events and deal with affiliates.

The two opposites complement each other. Tonight, Hill wears a red polo shirt and jeans. Havard wears a stingy fedora and a pin-stripe suit jacket. Hill uses the words "overhead," "clientele" and "venue negotiation" regularly in conversation. Havard is more likely to shout phrases like "Patricia's in the house, y'all!"

And while Havard is swiveling his hula-hooping hips, Hill blends into the background.

"Someone has to have a respectful corporate face," Hill says as he laughs at Havard's antics.  [See photos from the event »](#)

Meanwhile, Alisha Wheeler has on her game face. A man she just met is teaching her to play Scrabble, and it's not as easy as it looks. Wheeler found out about PlayDate on the Internet and decided to check it out.

"To be able to play games again and not be an adult for one night, it's kind of fun," she says. "It's not the typical, uneasy having to go up to someone you don't know, because everyone has on these silly nametags, and [the games] are like an icebreaker."

Todd Jones agrees. A PlayDate veteran, Jones has been coming to the events since they started three years ago. He's even attended launches in other cities and says the atmosphere is the same everywhere.

"When you go to a club, people will stand around. They're very defensive," Jones says. "But here, you really have to intermingle."

Gesturing to the six women he's playing Uno with, Jones says he doesn't come to PlayDate looking to hook up. "I just come here really to have a good time. If something happens after that, then, fine."

Havard says that's the basis of his company, Timeless, which also offers Paint By Numbers and Call Me UP. Paint By Numbers lets people socialize while painting a 100-square-foot mural. Call Me UP is a new interactive take on a stand-up comedy club.

"You go to a nightclub, a lot of times, that scene is the same," Havard says. "It's too loud; it's too dark; it's too smoky. A lot of people have on their nightclub personas, so you don't get to know real people. What we've found with PlayDate is, it lets people let their guard down and be themselves. It's romantic, in a sense, because you begin to connect like you did when you were younger."

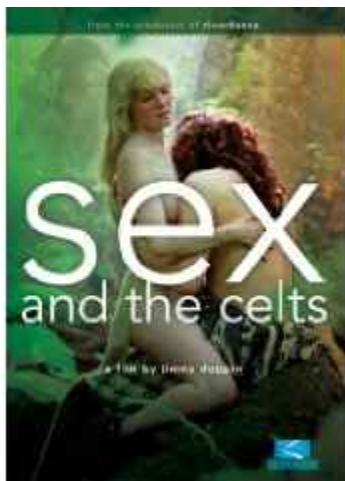
Back on the dance floor, Havard narrates a game of musical chairs. As the music stops, a woman and man fight for the last chair. "Girl, you've got a nice booty, but it ain't in the seat," Havard shouts into the microphone. "Everybody say byyyyyeee!"

ADVERTISEMENT

As the crowd shouts a farewell, Hill looks at his watch, shrugs proudly and smiles.

"It's not every day you can answer 'what do you do for a living?' with 'I have fun, and I make sure other people have fun, too,'" he says. "I mean, where else in the world would you see 30- and 40-year-olds playing musical chairs at midnight?"

MEDIA CORNER



Sex and the Celts

Director: Jimmy Duggan

Originally titled "Sex and Sinners", 2 parts on the DVD.

NR / 2005 / 104 minutes

Available at www.pathfinderpictures.com and www.amazon.com for about \$12 to \$18.

UPC# 825307-915594

CAT# PH-91559 - \$19.98

SPECIAL FEATURES:

16X9 wide screen, Trailer, Chapter Selections

Fantasy/Documentary

Language: English

Works on the US DVD system.

Okay, the title caught my eye, but I was quite pleased with how well it was produced by an Irish production company. You'll have to have read a few books on Irish history, or the various rapid-fire discussed legends, placenames and historical events may be a bit overwhelming. If you were to take out the historical re-enactors from the background of the narrative and 15 or so Irish historians, what you have here is an rollicking good lecture that might open a few sleepy student's eyes in a rather good university. I thought I knew a bit about Irish gender and sexuality history, but the brought time sweep and little 2 minute signets, music and landscape, made it a lot more fun than a black and white essay or book. It was most disappointing in post 1970s review of Ireland, since it assumed you knew all about current Irish mores and activities, since the audience were modern Irish. If you're willing to pay \$40 per class at college, this CD will be an well-worth-it lesson for you.

The jacket cover reads:

Sex & The Celts traces the complete timeline of Irish sexual and gender development from the mysterious sexio-religious rites of pre-history to the all too blatant teenage coming of age rituals of present day life.

Dramatic reconstructions reveal such unexpected aspects of Irish history as the bisexual orientation of the macho Celtic warrior elite. Interviewees tell of an island which once had the right of a woman to experience orgasm enshrined in its legal framework.

Documentary footage explores the visual heritage of the erotic from the Neolithic landscape of "detached sexual objects." Sex & The Celts pauses in its timeline to subject particularly interesting shifts in sexual paradigms to the scrutiny of historical analysis... and some dryly humorous comment.

One reviewer on Amazon.com relates:

This is definitely not the History Channel. The presented facts become much less important than the evolving emotions and attitudes, which are accenting by the stirring music. It's almost worth it to watch this show just for the sake of listening to the soundtrack. Each varying theme casts the mood of a given era with incredible accuracy. It's a very sensual presentation, obviously meant for a mature audience. Yes, you will see bare breasts and sexual images just like on the cover but they're shown in a ways that's more artistic than explicit.

I also like the choice of narrator. It's a woman with a low, languid voice marked by an Irish accent. She's well-chosen for the topic and adds to the over-all ambiance.

Some might be put off by this show simply because it can be a touchy, somewhat personal topic. But sex and sensuality are integral parts of our history no matter how much some people might want to sweep them under a rug. I admire this show for its artistry and its bold approach. It's simply mesmerizing to watch. Don't judge it until you've seen it. You might end up equally captivated.

Publishing Information

Title: Druid Inquirer: A Scrapbook of the Reformed Druid Communities

Editor: Michael the Fool

Published: 8 times a year. No mailed copies, just free on the internet, print your own.

Submissions Policy: Give it to me! If you have news about your grove, written a little essay, like to write up a book or move, have a poem, saw an interesting news article in the paper, or have a cartoon, send it in to mikerdna@hotmail.com

I'll try to give credit to whoever the original author is, and they retain the copyright to their works, and we'll reprint it one day in a future binding also. Nasty works will not be published. Although my standards are not sky-high, incomplete works will be nurtured towards a publish-able form. Submissions are accepted from other publications and organizations, so you need not be a formal member of the RDNA to have your items published.