



Samhain Issue
Year of the Reform "LI"
November 4, 2013 c.e.
Volume 30 Issue 7

Editor's Note

Samhain blessings from Arlington Cemetery on a cloudy morning. I hope you are not in mourning and have clear prospects. May you be blest with the company and comfort of departed family, friends and familiars as you and they meet again this day to partake of food, fun and frivolity. I feel every birth is also a return of a spirit and every death is a reconnection with the Revered Dead, bridging our two communities.

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NEWS OF THE GROVES



Tuatha De Danann Grove: News from California

I'm just checking in. I've been uber busy, but I've been following what's going on. I think things are finally settling down, so I'll be contributing more. This group is really growing in size, and I hope that we continue to do so. Blessings, Sean Peace! Peace! Peace!
-Sean

Raven's Grove: News from Quebec



My Council Drum project (Traditional Grandfather Drum)
Carved from yellow birch at my shop. What a great experience.

See Sebastien and Penny's poems below.

Oakdale Grove: News from Minnesota



See the videos of Sirona Devotion and Samhain Ritual below in this issue.

So, the Oakdale Grove members (and maybe the Grove's non-RDNA Celtic Shaman) will be making a pilgrimage to the Carleton College Arboretum on this coming Sunday, October 27 for pre-Samhain and Samhain OCWs and a "Closing of the Arb". Looks like the weather will be similar to what we experienced on the 50th Beltane, though possibly with less snow this time. If Matt Jaquette and Anna Smith wish to meet us out there, we'll tentatively be

slightly late at the Hill of Three Oaks after 1 PM.

Stacey What is the "Closing of the Arb?"

John I think that's one of Mike's customs, where he would have a procession through the trails, symbolically to say "goodnight" to the Season of Life, letting the land spirits take their rest... Mike TheFool might do a better job of explaining it than I can

Mike TheFool the closing of the arb was practiced in the early years until 1975. sort of like the last tour of the woods before snows and cold mad it diifficult to visit outdoor sites. the greenbook volume 1 has the Yeat's faery poem that was often sung or read on the journey, sometimes with torches. the may day festivities would include an awakening of the arb by the archdruid and others, perhaps in a vain search for flowers. I do not believe the custom spread beyond carleton, but I revived it and some continued it I think.

Mike TheFool I always preferred the terminology Common Order of Worship rather than Order of Common Worship. "COW" is more funny. And if you drink whiskey it becomes "COW tipping"



Oakdale Grove holding a service Oct 8 for Maryn (purple coat) to "test the waters" and see if she wants to join the RDNA. She opted not to enter the First Order just yet, as her schedule barely allowed for her to attend today, and she may be too busy to join a grove just yet. Photos taken by "Wolf." — with [John Edwards](#) and [2 others](#).



Crafted a sodalite sigil pendant for one of my grove members who asked for some RDNA bling and donated to the grove treasury. She's not on Facebook, so she won't see it yet



My new "sickle" arrived in the mail today. It is an American-made Ontario Cutlery grape-hook knife, technically for harvesting wine grapes, but will be for cutting the sacrifices. It's quite sharp, and high carbon steel.

Koad Grove: News from Michigan



A beautiful morning for a beautiful ritual with beautiful people!
And congratulations to our newest 2nd Order...Kirk Hofer!

ADF & RDG Anniversaries



ADF turns 30 in 2013

Kirk Thomas, former Archdruid of ADF

This year, ADF has something to celebrate!

At a Samhain rite at the Winterstar Symposium held in 1983, Isaac Bonewits, a scholar, visionary, and teacher, announced the formation of a new religion, Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF). Isaac's idea for ADF was revolutionary for its time. His path-making vision was to see ADF certified clergy in every major city and be recognized as a true world religion. The letter that announced the forming of ADF and what it was all about was written in the first "Druids Progress." In it, he outlined his concept of ADF as a fluid and dynamic religion, evolving and adapting ancient Pagan faiths in a modern context for his generation and continuing to evolve with the ones to follow.

This Samhain marks our 30th Anniversary!

Today, ADF is thriving, as generations of members grow up in the path, and are passing it on to the next generation. From its humble beginnings, there is now a solid core order of worship. There are currently 26 certified ordained clergy; 74 groves (congregations) in the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia, and Brazil with members on 6 continents; and numerous festivals held all around the United States and Canada every year.

Happy Anniversary, ADF!



RDG Birthday

Happy 7! November 1st, (1 Geimredh) is the New Year of the Reform, being the 7th Year of 2nd Age of the Reformed Druids which began with the birth of the Reformed Druids of Gaia (Note: for the other RDXX it's year 50 of the 1st Age).

How are we looking up?

I'll take a look and get back to you.

Druid Poetry

Oh Brigid

You, great mother of peace, of healing and protection
You, who brings harmony where there is conflict.
You, who brings light to the darkness.
You, who brings hope to the despair.
You, who brings healing to the suffering

May you carry the light of order, harmony and love
May you cover those in need with your cloak of
hope
May you always protect those who are troubled and
anxious,
As we carry your presence within our heart
May you transcend your divine gifts within us and in
the world around us.
Inspire us to act justly towards others
With understanding and knowledge.
In the reverence in all goodness
In the reverence of your greatness

My you bring forward
The vision of gratefulness
The gift of giving
The touch of tenderness
The product of acknowledgment
To the selfish and the self centered
May you bring balance of body,mind and spirit
To those in deep difficulty
Brigid, you are the voice for the wounded and the
weary.
Protect them and bring them balance and joyfulness

Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May you grow each day within us
Awen

-Sebastien

Let me dream,
please, let me dream
let me sing,
please, let me sing

'bout love and beauty
'boot love and understanding
'bout love, never-ending
'bout love, all and one and one and all

but let me say,
please, let me say
let me grumble,
please, let me grumble

'bout love and arrogance
'bout love and blackmail
'bout love and heartbreaking
'bout love and fighting

so hear my plea for love
love and being human
-Hennie

There is a pleasure in the path less woods;
There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more...
- Lord Byron

The Consort dances in the moonlight's shade,
The Hunter's horns fall as sunbeams fade,
The Hounds find where the Path was laid,
Seekers dance before Her blade,
Oaths of silence are made,
A gift's price is paid,
Don't be afraid,
Whispers fade,
Obeyed,
Might.
-Coyoti Geo

He, Mum. how do you feel
now your woods have gone?
angry, sad, indifferent?

Say, Mother, what's our opinion
now your fish have gone?
a bit empty, lifeless, belittled?

Oh, Goddess, what do you say
about all them Pagan people
praying for you
calling for you
hurting for you

Shhss, I will be alright in the end
but, bugger, have you brought me difficulties
the question is not
if I abandon you
you should ask yourself
what chances
you created.

And then I am a bit lonely.
-Hennie

dancing Mistress of the skies
beaming light for a as long
as the human race will be

glowing Diamond of Life
radiating Love beyond comprehension
to us, in the smallness of our thoughts

Shine, shine like mad
and convince me
of an eternity
of lust and fulfilment
never to be forgotten
never to be belittled
never to be known

Sun of our existence
Be, just Be!
-Hennie

THE LEGEND OF THE DRUIDS WHO NEVER ADJOURNED

Tune: The M.T.A. by the Kingston Trio (adapted
from "The UUs Who Never Adjourned by Robert R.
Walsh)

Let me tell the legend of some fine Pagan people
They were Druids every one
They sat down for the meeting,
Counted up the quorum
And declared the meeting begun.

CHORUS

But did they ever adjourn?
No they never adjourned;
And their fate is still unlearned.
They may meet forever
With the Rules of Robert,
The Druids who never adjourned.

End CHORUS

They adopted an agenda;
And corrected the minutes;
They appointed committee chairs;
They amended the amendment,
Called the previous question,
Even issued the annual state of affairs.

CHORUS

The Senior Druid's husband
Comes down to the meeting
Every morning at quarter past eight
And out in the kitchen
Brews a pot of fresh coffee
For the poor folks who deliberate.

CHORUS

They debated the cost of brochure paper
And the fine points of DP study guide use;
They debated the length
Of the Priest's pre-ritual briefings.
And the cost of cookies and juice.

CHORUS

On a point of order the Vice-Senior Druid
Breathed his last word with a sigh;
There was a minute of silence
As old Charlie went off
To that board meeting in the sky.

CHORUS

--Anonymous

BUT ONE

But a cell within it's shape,
my human form it does take.
But a drop of blood within my heart,
my mortal life is but a start.
But a breath my lungs intake,
transform the voice within this wake.
But a soul within a shell,
surrounds my cloak I wear so well.
But a place within a sphere,
to hail the cog on the Wheel of the Year.
But a druid within a clan,
heart to heart and hand to hand.
But a moment in present time,
my Ancestors sing within my mind.
But a ring within the maille,
I feel the thinning of the veil.
All is none and none is all,
to hear the auld ones come to call.
Central pivot and leading edge,
I swear the universal pledge.
Secrets within the mystery,
there's but one truth among many.



~j.anglehart 2013~

George's Words

Who am I:

My Voice is know both Far and Near
But at my home I am always here.

All know of me and that I bring tidings of
Glad or Fear.
Yet few have moved me as I set here.

I am cast of Fire and frozen in the Clay.
I was born and grew cold in but a single
Day.

I have out lived my every lover and shed the
Tear as they passed Away.
And when a new one is born, I sing out on
their very first Day.

I am Bell and never leave but guide all along
their Way.
An for you I shall Pearl too when it is your
very last Day.

TDK

(NOTE: Was just talking to the Spirit in a old Village Town Bell. I
known where or why except that it was lonely and very Sad.
Perhaps I had lived there long ago and rang out its news for all to
hear and it found me after so many a lost life and year.

This is the way with a Druid Bard of SummerLand.

Ode to Druid's Art:

The Lamp of Art has been Lite.
Sacred smoke rises from the Thurible.
Sweet smells from the Stick.
Chalice holds the Wine of Heart.
Sacred Blood of which I Depart.
Pentacle centered in Circle of Salt.
Wand held Strong in Mind Hand and Heart.
Black Blade near by to the cut Portal of
Dark Art.

Showstone is Black as the darkest Night.
Yet shines My Will in secret Moonlight.
While I Scry what can not be Seen.
Our Scared Power that exist in between.
Robe of Birth is all I Wear.
In Chill of Night but do not Care.
Here in this Special Place, known to None.
Is where My Great Art shall be Done.
No fear or Guilt Stain My Soul.
For I am Druid of Oak and ever Bold.
As it was in times of Old when Ley was
Young
The Will of Druid and the Gods are now
One.

TDK / The Druid King
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Druui in Silver Cords:

Yes I now live in a Human Shell.
I have been to Heaven and to Hell.
But I Druui and in Summer-Lands my Golden
Soul does eternal Dwell.
Moon Rising
TDK

We Druids are but buoys of ancient Oak
caught in the ebb and flow of the Moon's
magick tides.
TDK

Names

I have been called so many along Life's
eternal Way.
Quill of Summer's land and the Dead.
Bard of the Ley and Mystic Way.
Dark Druid of Death by the Fae.
Good Friend True Oak along life's Way.
Enemy from hell, worst than Pictish Blue
Moon's Lover of the Night
Sun's caller to bring the Bright.
None were Wrong and all were Right
But am just an Adder lost in Time.
Would reopen the Henge and the Portal but
can not remember the Rhyme.
So Die I must and turn to Dust.
But Lust of life will bring me back Again.
For being Immortal is my Sin.
TDK / The Druid King
(c) George King 2013

For those that have the Honor and the
Heartbreak of a Summerland Soul Watch.
We must remember as Druids.
Everyone who is very very Ill always gets
well !
Sometimes happily here. But in the end
Summerland for us all.
Moon setting.
TDK

SummerLand Cycle:

When Silver cord has returned to Gold.
Death's Black Winter breather has blow so
cold.

Nothing here but shell and Ghost.
For Soul has returned to its Host.

Cry not for what you have lost.
But sight with joy as eternal life has paid the
cost.

Soul has recharged once again.
Life in Summers Land does begin.

Till its time to dive back into new skin.
To charge the Soul once again.
TDK

Summerland has taken a beloved Soul back
to its own. And thought I know Life after
Life to a fact and have spent many years
researching it. Seeing Souls Return in both
Spirit and Flesh.

Yet it hurts so bad. Seems I have redeemed
my own humanity after Vietnam also.

Blessing to all and to all good night.

Summerland Soul Watch is over for me
tonight.

Moon Setting
Babel is Risen

TDK / The Druid King.

Samhain and the Ley, written in falling
leaves and Fairy Weave.
All along the Ley.
The Ghost on Samhain shall come out to
play.
Once again to ride its straight and Narrow
way.
Yet few today will ever see this magick
sight.
For lost of hidden vision is but part of
modern Druid's plight.
Most know not even of the Cole-Men and
the great Ley
Or ever wonder why they were cut long long
yesterday.
What knowledge and power did ancient
Druid have to command.
Or why of it all, we have now only straight
lines cut in the land.
So many were made, yet they point no
special way.
Many run hither dither seems every witch
way.
Yet all are were laser straight and cuts of
true Ley.
So if you see me walking down a road that
can not be seen.
Laughing and talking like a mad man to
what seems but a strange Wind.
Worry not for this old Druid has just come
to play joining old friends of Yesterday.
TDK / The Druid King
(c) George King

The way is lost.
The Ley is gone.
SummerLand is the most important thing a
Druid has left to Teach.
TDK

Summerland is both the land of those with a
physical body and those that have shed it.
It is where everything in our physical world
has its shadow form beginning also.
TDK

Respect: By George

An issue that comes up a lot in Pagan and
Inter Faith circles.

My view is simple I feel that one must
always respect another's rights to their on
views.

This is very important.

As to respecting the others view or views . It
would be asinine to discredit one's own
understanding of the universe or restrain
speaking honestly when ask about another's
views.

If you think they are a dupe sheeple stupid
or just been miss informed and programmed.
That is your absolute right, no need to lie or
play socially correct.

Yet their is also no reason tear away their
security belief blanket either or try and make
them feel bad.

After all in most cases we already have a
good feel for if the other person can stand
opposing views or is open minded. Poking
someone with the sharp stick of esoteric
reason only makes their inner dog hurt and
howl.

MIKE'S WORDS

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the souls around me keep
Watch and spin tales all night
Until the rising sun's first light
-MTF

Mind your own business and you will be plenty busy. –MTF

Druidism is like having season tickets to nature's concerted wonders with front seats. MTF some complain about a cruel and uncaring world. I disagree. The world is ver selfish and cares only about itself. As I am part of the world, it cares about me. If I were more selfish, I would care more about it. Does that make sense? MTF

I am only at the surface. The well of wisdom goes deeper than I can hold my breath, unless I become a fish, a coin or the earth that holds the water. MTF

Why is that most mythologies start to make less sense once you have to start explaining it? MTF

Mike Musing #38: did you know Druids invented Ogham "from scratch"?

BTW: beware the Druid pick-up line-- "Want to come to my standing stone and see my etchings?". You'll end up a notch on his belt, ladies.

Mike Musing#34: The reason I like modern druids more than the ancient Druids, is that they are still alive.

I think I should diversify away my dull diet of humble pie, perhap I could eat crow more often? I can no less stop being a Celt than I can stop breathing.....gack.... Now I look like a Pict.
MTF

I once considered becoming a stand-up comic, but I preferred sitting down. MTF

I knew an alchemist with a sense of humor, I can't remember if it was bile or gall. MTF

Does a GMO acorn need any less love or reverence from a Druid? No, no less than any other child of nature. Don't hate the offspring of the test tubes, even if you don't partake of them. I sometimes wonder if the gods approve of the jokes I make about Them. But then I realize that must have had a sense of humor, because They made me, and so They are culpable too. I wonder why so many Druids don't smile, but I realize every comic needs a straight man. Besides they have their own performance style to impart their ideas and challenge the Druid community.

laughter is a physiological response to neurons unexpectedly and inextricably becoming enmeshed through a sudden learning experience. Its why you can't laugh easily twice at the same joke, because its difficult to learn something twice in the same way.MTF

Miscellaneous Sayings

Riddle:

It's 3 am. the doorbell rings and you wake up. unexpected visitors; it's you parents and they are there for breakfast. You have strawberry jam, honey, wine, bread and cheese. What is the first thing you open?

A tree is a tree. it doesnt argue with what type of tree, its just a tree. young or old, huge or small, tall or bushy, thorny or smooth. still a tree. now replace the word tree with what you identify yourself as and watch magick -Kaleb

"If I were to pass on any advice to my followers, it would be to never consider that they have found, as Druids, the ultimate answer to any of their questions. Druidism is a faith, if a faith, in questioning, not in answering. Awareness, to a Druid, is an individual thing, to be shared, perhaps, but never codified.

It has been asked, and with good reason: what is awareness. I

can only answer that for me, awareness has meant a strengthening of my own faith, through communing with myself and with the world around me. I have come to a closer vision of the greater Reality that lies beyond this world precisely because I have come to appreciate this world."

-- David Fisher in The Book of Faith, ARDA





“Strength in Frailty”

a Samhain Meditation 2013

Chapter the First

1. Samhain is upon us, and I was surrounded by a colorful reminder of the demise of all things.
2. There is no greater matter which weighs upon our existence than our non-existence.
3. One could go on forever about how we will not go on forever.
4. An unpleasant subject for some, but unavoidable. Here are my thoughts today.

Chapter the Second

1. My missive to you is brought by the marvel of the internet.
2. The paragon of mankind’s achievements. Symbolic of our strength in frailty.
3. All the electrons of the internet, accumulated, would weigh less than the matter of one grain of rice.
4. A splendid creation that is one high-altitude EMP away from oblivion.
5. We each consume an immense quantity of organisms (including grains of rice) in our struggle to stay alive, until we too feed the efforts of others, both with our body, and the works of our mind and heart.
6. Even the greatest of us walk this earth, just one heart beat from death.

Chapter the Third

1. In our 5 million year history, the last 50,000 have been startling to our fellow beasts, the last 5000 have been recorded in furrows of fields, and the last 500 have been mind-boggling prolific in culture, and the last 50 years have been white-hot in production.
2. Man’s creations and knowledge would decay and disappear from the face of the earth in 5000 years without maintenance after an apocalypse.
3. Death is a great demotivator for the gloomy, and a terrifying spur to inspiration for others to feverishly materialize their dreams and leave a mark on the world before their inner-clock rings out the unexpected deadline.
4. The drama of mankind’s march through history is breath-taking in billions of private and public acts, at once tragic, comedic and romantic, lost by the passage of time, with or without an audience.

Chapter the Fourth

1. Yet we continue. We create. We reproduce. We teach.
2. As animals teach hunting and grazing techniques to their young, we pass our culture and traditions to our next generation of understudies to take our place.

3. Oh, the strength and bravery in the face of our frailty and temporality.
4. The uncertainty of our future, the fuzzy recollection of where we came from.
5. The clarity and preciousness of our current moment, irreducibly unique.
6. Here, huddled together, our bickering seething mass of humanity , spread thinly over the face of the world, ever crowding out room for other actors in the global ecosphere.
7. We, the humans, chewing the scenery and shouting our parts in a poorly coordinated psychodrama.

Chapter the Fifth

1. What role will I play? What will my final lines be, before I too shuffle off this mortal coil?
2. And will there await me applause, jeering, stunned murmuring, or an empty theatre?
3. I give you no answers. That would be spoilers.
4. I can only hope to later hand you a fragile blossom that has sprung from the dead slumber of the frozen ground, and share its message of renewed hope from long suffering despair.
5. Samhain. A new act in the sacred drama has begun.
6. The curtains and veils are lifted momentarily again.
7. I must step between them and perform.
8. Will you join me and Them as we gather again for a repeat tour de force?

Rest in peace... rest in peace... rest in peace....

By Mike the Fool
Archdruid of Arlington

Day 3 of Geimreadh, Year LI
November 3, 2013 c.e.

Written in a dark cave under Arlington (Metro Station).
Dedicated to all who have passed on in the last four seasons.

DRUID VIDEOS



What We Do With Dead Bodies

Everyone dies, but what do we do with those bodies? In this episode of SciShow, Hank explores the various options, from mummification to liquefaction, and ev...

<http://youtu.be/hPyTHzNapDs>



Ylvis - The Fox (What Does the Fox Say?) [Official music video HD]

iTunes: <http://smarturl.it/thefox-itunes> I kveld med YLVIS hver tirsdag og torsdag kl. 21.30 på TVNorge. Ylvis - [Official music video playlist HD]: <http://w...>

Good fun. I detect a little Norwegian shamanism in this?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jofNR_WkoCE



Bet You Didn't Know: Halloween

It's one of America's favorite holidays, but what's the real story behind the tricks and treats of Halloween? Subscribe for more History: <http://bit.ly/18Hz3...>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHQZertwA3E>

Nothing better than a bunch of guys hitting eachother's nuts.
Anyone have a horse chestnut tree nearby?



How To Succeed At Conkers

Watch How To Succeed At Conkers from the leading how to video provider. This guide will give you helpful instructions to ensure you get good at kids channel,...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cQ-eZOWgvI>



A McAtheist moment? www.economist.com

EVEN in a world where many people feel jaded by organised religion, there can still be lots of room for organised non-religion. That's one of the many reasons...

Even Athiests wanna get together <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2013/10/godless-gatherings?fsrc=scn%2Ffb%2Fw1%2Fbl%2Fmcatheist>



The Witch

www.youtube.com

The Witch - Wise Woman of the People. Witch, Wiccan, Cunning Folk & Healers, this poem is to honour them and their suffering. 2013 will be a

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5luL_gNy-zE



The Butterfly's Tale ~

by Celestial Elf 6,274 views

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1fO8SxQs-E&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL4EEAD495AFEAFBF3>



A Viking Journey To England

251 views 3 weeks ago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beRMUR0RTlg&feature=c4-overview&list=UUaw5YHvDNPVZ4COHcUoOmkA>

Slow and majestic. Enjoy.



Samhain Song

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_profile_page&v=SXa5BMorxT0

8,058 views 6 days ago

Samhain the beginning of the "darker half" of the year - the veil is thin between the worlds of the living and dead. As at Beltane, special bonfires are lit to protect the community. Feasts are also held, at which the souls of dead kin are invited and a place set at the table for them. Originally the "Feast of the Dead" was

celebrated in Celtic countries by leaving food offerings on altars and d...

Read more



What Happens when you Stop Eating?

363,913 views 1 week ago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzSqhrn2dDM&feature=c4-overview&list=UUZYTCIx2T1of7BRZ86-8fow>



What is Wind?

6 days ago • 174,256 views
We all know that warm air rise influence our weather and crea

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RehCW0KM8RM>



Sleep: Why We Need It and What Happens Without It

432,630 views 2 weeks ago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwNMvUXTgDY>



Resurrection Biology: How to Bring Animals Back From ...

184,407 views 1 month ago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-0mT4oQH3o>

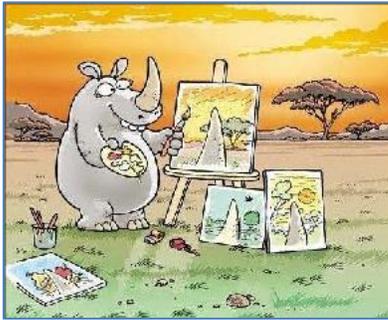


What Happens if You're Struck By Lightning?

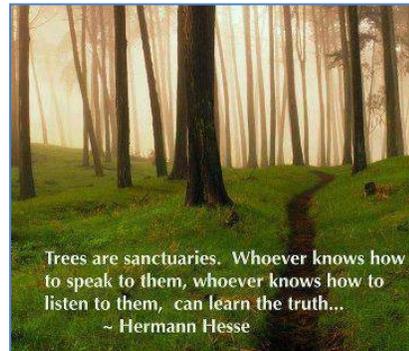
238,181 views 1 month ago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1HhRAUqFqM>

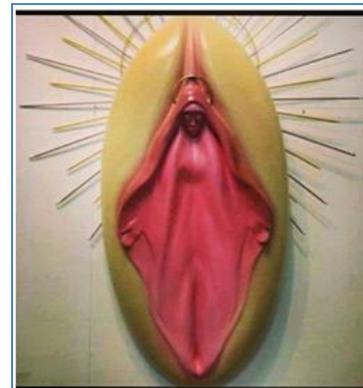
Druid Pictures



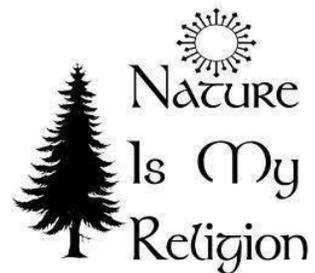
© 2012 Funny stuff at FUNNYASDUCK.NET



-Geert



The Balance of Nature





A Chant at Samhain

by David Fisher 1963

Priest: Ea, Lord, Ea, Mother, thou with uncounted names and faces, Thou of the many faceted nature, in and above all, to thee we sing our chants of praise.

Chorus: Go thou not from us!

Priest: Dalon Ap Landu, Lord of this and all Groves, mover by night and by day, descend not beneath the earth, turn not thy

pleasing face from us.

Chorus: Go thou not from us!

Priest: The leaves wither, the trees and fields are barren, on what can we depend? Where is thy order, where thy strength?

Chorus: Depart not from our midst, sleep not, O most high!

Priest: The Sun, the bright fire of day, withdraws his chariot; his face is veiled with clouds, and the breath of the North Wind walks the land.

Chorus: Return to us his warmth!

COMMENTS

John I've been trying to understand the word "Ea" since the first time I saw this invocation... I've modified it in my personal use to "O," since I don't like using words that I don't understand, though I've tried looking it up from time to time, and mostly find definitions as "each," abbreviated.

Jon I presume it is pronounce "yay" as is in "Yea, verily"

Phillip had a great Samhain ritual in the woods tonight had alot of questions answered was very nice

Mike TheFool I think EA was just a Mesopotamnian deity. They mixed it up back then. Insert a deity you feel appropriate.

Jeffrey No relation to the Lovecraftian chant of "Ia! Ia!"...I think...

Mike TheFool Samhain 1963 was a turning point in the Carleton Grove. They had done a 1/2 year, made it through the summer, drafted a constitution, and had a big Samhain service with powerful omens. Things were looked a bit more serious, and when JFK died in November a few weeks later, well, many saw it as a sign.

DRUID RITUAL VIDEO

DEBATE 1: SAMHAIN VIDEO



Votive Offering to Sirona - Reformed Druids of North America
www.youtube.com
the Oakdale Grove of the Reformed Druids of North America go to the Carleton Grove to

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gAK1PyFHSY>

Oakdale Grove visiting the Carleton Grove to observe Samhain



Reformed Druid Samhain Ritual
www.youtube.com
Sorry about the poor sound quality. C.O.W. aka "Common Order of Worship," using the liturgy of the New Reformed Druids of North America, found

Recording of a service, minus a tripod. Apologies for the muffled sound. I turned it up in post production and this is how it came out.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V55V51B5pkE>

Mike TheFool This might be a first. Don't know if anyone has ever filmed one before.

Jamie Wonderful. Haven't been able to be at one in person, but this is the next best thing.

Mike TheFool That was pretty quick omen-taking of the winds. Gotta give them a bit more time.

Mike TheFool You might like this animated version I made last year.

Mike TheFool You might like this animated version I made last year.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23SFinFlxCo>

Desperate Druids: Part 14 - Celebration
(CC) After weeks of study and consultations, and two episodes of preparation, Pe...
See More

October 29 at 10:36pm · Like · 3 · Remove Preview

Mike TheFool Part 12 has a few liturgy related questions
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mwK6KgNu9U>

Desperate Druids: Part 12 - Asking the Rite Questions
The Archdruidess answers liturgical questions, shares her approach to ritual, an...
See More

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23SFinFlxCo>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mwK6KgNu9U>

Mike TheFool Good ribbon switching timing.

John M It was the first time that the winds were actually silent for me. Usually on days with low wind, they pick up at exactly the opportune time

Mike TheFool Noticed you didn't have a song at the beginning. That might have jinxed it. To get air, you gotta give air from your body. I guess the horn counts.

Mike TheFool Your preceptor is well trained, not a first time, is it.

Mike TheFool I see you are doing the arm-circle, two finger for line mudra-motion. One of my favorite variants. Sometimes I do two tomahawk chops at the end instead.

John Actually, that WAS his first time precepting (Paul). He's been studying the liturgy. I still have yet to learn the Hymn To The Earth Mother. I've only heard it once from Stacey . We could use a video of that too!

Mike TheFool Can't really discern it, but that's an ogham/rune divination at 11:00?

Mike TheFool No meditation besides the divination interpretation?

John M Glagolitic Runes, a system I developed based on the meaning of the names of the letters of the Glagolitic alphabet. In practice, they work similar to Norse Runes, but some Glagolitic symbols are upside down from others, and have different meanings, so no interpretations for inverted symbols.

John Yeah, we (and by we I mean I) forgot to have a silent meditation, but we used the poem by Yeats as an incantation of praise (after the ceremony we had the closing of the [Upper] Arboretum

Mike TheFool Can't have a real campfire, but a torch/candle/bowl fire would be a good idea at the site.

Mike TheFool I do an awful singing in the animated video. Richard Shelton in the Twin Cities can teach it to you.

John M Earl brought a glass skull shaped candle holder, which was lit for the procession, during the ceremony (at center of altar; sometimes glimmers of candle light reflect off of the chalice as it gets darker) and during the closing of the Arb.

Mike TheFool Gotta go to bed. Great video. For a more snazzy one. Take video from two angles simultaneously and splice back and forth, maybe one from the altar for dramatic & sound and one for pull back from a tree above/pole.

John M There is a prospective seeker of the Oakdale Grove, named Maryn. She is a very skilled artisan with copper, and she has a really nice copper staff with a spike at one end, and she can detach the top, turn it upside down, and reattach it to the staff, unscrew a cap, and light a kerosene wick, and then her staff is a torch that burns for a few hours even in wind. I'm hoping she finds the time available to join up, but she's quite busy

Jon D Michael, the RDNA/NRDNA Ritual at Pantheacon was filmed this year

John M Was it indoors or outdoors? I have a grove member who has concerns about having rituals when it's 15 degrees out.

Jon D It was outdoors

Jon D BTW, John, you are doing WONDERFUL work with your Grove - I love reading your posts

John M Thank you! My grove members have had a lot of fun, the group dynamic has a good energy to it, we look to each other for spiritual growth, and the whole thing has really helped me fine tune my organizational skills and responsibilities, though there's still PLENTY of room for me to improve on that. I make sure the grove helps me keep my humility in check - definitely a noble virtue to hold dear!

John E John you are doing well. We gain experience as we grow and walk the path when we are in leadership positions. I would have to say though...I do look rather backwoods in this video. I did not fully realize it until I watched it.

Mike TheFool Oh, yes, Jon Got a copy of that video posted?

Sébastien Oh john... just a note for next time... you should call it "A Reformed Druid Samhain Ritual"

Sébastien A ritual amongst many

Sébastien Love it!!! Good job...

John title and subject edited accordingly

Sébastien It is good to have a reformed ritual on youtube. It is a good teaching tool

John M ...and the poor sound quality leaves some mystery intact!

Glenn Excellent! Thank you!

Mike TheFool Good decor, costumes and props and presentation. If you integrate some poems/song/dance/call-response/group-movements, then the rest will have more involvement in what is a very priest-centered liturgy we have.

Mike TheFool Allowing us to submit a meditation to be read is good.

Mike TheFool Having others prepare a decoration, choose a sacrifice, or tend a fire, keeps everyone involved too.

Mike TheFool In some ways, Ritual is like sacred drama. There are more than enough roles for all the actors, depending on their interest and proficiency. They shouldn't just have the option of audience.

Mary What an insightful comment, Mike TheFool. Having been raised in a non-religious household, the only ritual I've ever experienced was the singing of "Happy Birthday to You," which does, if you think about it, have that inclusive aspect.



DEBATE 2: LITURGY INVOLVEMENT

MIKE: John's video got me thinking. While on paper, the RDNA liturgy scripts look very centered on the officiant, let's discuss ways you can give other attendees a role before/during/after a service, regardless of what "order" they belong to at the time. I would also add that every meeting and festival need not have a priest-driven liturgy as the main event --- or even take place, you can meet and work on activities without a formal service. Your thoughts?

Tony ow, I will get back to you on that one.

Jamie Yup, the unofficial meeting of the no-name non-grove full of zero orders will commence tonight... Photos tomorrow.

Tiff Truth be told, I am a fan of informality. I'd love to gather a group of folks to go on seasonal/sabbat hikes through the mountains here, where we could marvel at the poetry of nature in whatever way feels relevant to each one of us. At this time, I have been doing that by myself, family in tow.

Rusty Celt "Religion" is to meet somewhere nice, and have a picnic with your Family...not build a "groveling temple" to feed the fat priests.

Kirk We utilize a processional chant that is easy to learn that all join in singing. Also we have a small hand held drum that we give to someone to provide a drum beat at various portions of the rituals. We have recently started the practice of passing the sacrifice around for everyone to hold for a few moments and say a few words of thanks or praise if they wish before the priest places it in the fire or on the altar, rather than only the priest doing it all. this definitely gives the feeling of the whole group being involved and offering the sacrifice.

Kirk also aside from rituals, we get together a lot to go for nature walks and to eat, we like to eat.....a lot lol. and enjoy good conversation usually about druidic philosophy and such.

Sean Jon D, Stacey, Jen, and I performed an RDNA liturgy at Pantheon that saw wide participation. The ritual centered on four leads, and then a magical working involving everyone. Jon D wrote an awesome ritual, and hopefully he'll share it here.

Mike TheFool Normally the older liturgies in ARDA only mention the Priest and Preceptor (sometimes the server or a bard). In fact there are a number of liturgical helping roles from (as Kirk mentioned) sacrifice gathering, firewood gathering, fire tender, food preparer, equipment hauler for the physically oriented. For the artistic there are decorations for the space, garb, candle crafting. For the bard there are songs, music, poems. For the academic there are meditations to collect and choose for the season. For group activity there is processions, call-response readings, songs, passing sacrifice, scouting omens, partaking of waters, reading meditations, mudras and dance intermissions. No matter a person's talents or hobbies, there is a possible role in festival/liturgy planning, just pipe up and say what you can do and it can be incorporated.

Mike TheFool Non liturgical ideas for festivities 8 times a year are in the unofficial welcome pamphlet pg 75 <http://rdna.info/uwp.doc>

Mike TheFool Liturgy is like sacred drama and theater is like profane liturgy. (?) My predecessor at Carleton Grove was Andrea, a Biology/Theater major who love nature and the stage of the passing seasons. The ancient Greek plays we learn in schools were an adjunct to temples rather than purely secular artistic performance. Think of your grove attendees rather as participating ACTors with roles (no matter how small) rather than static, quiet, passive audience observers. Solemn or joyful, it should be a little entertaining and have a lesson or message behind it.

John M The Oakdale Grove meets for coffee on average once a week, where the real philosophizing takes place, plus organizational discussion, many tangents, and a fair amount of crude humor, but just last night we discussed the topic of a more dynamic liturgy, expanding, embellishing, creating, gá-lor (galore is a Scots Gaelic phrase, you know!) In the video, that was our first actual use of the old NRDNA Samhain liturgy. A few of us had looked over it, but there was no rehearsal. Personally, I've learned to be cautious if I rehearse the liturgies, because if I speak the invocations out loud, I usually sense a presence. Dalon is particularly attentive, it seems. But if I don't speak out loud, I've noticed that I sense nothing. But I digress. A grove doesn't grow from saplings to a forest all at once. Given time, technique and participation will branch out.

Mike TheFool It certainly will. I'm too self-conscious to really rock out the performance aspect and get hammy/ostentatious. But I dream of putting on a grand spectacle someday.

Glenn Historical note: The early liturgies from Carleton are 40+ years old. Liturgical thought has evolved considerably since then, not just in Druidism. Practical note: Getting everybody involved is a great idea, but it is a lot easier when your group meets regularly and everybody understands their parts. Springing a complicated liturgy on a bunch of strangers is not going to go well. General note: Understand your setting. As someone in another part of my life put it, when liturgy argues with architecture, architecture always wins. Now we worship outside, so architecture per se is not the issue, but the concept still applies. Example: in September I went to

a wedding in a lovely garden in Colorado Springs. Unfortunately, it was near a railway yard, and the ceremony was interrupted several times by freight train horns. Note on John's liturgy: I was at the first part of his Samhain event, the COW with the Waters-of-Life, which was apparently not filmed. We had to move this off of the Hill of Three Oaks because the Carleton Archery Club had a scheduled practice there (the young man from that group was very polite and friendly) so we moved to Monument Hill. Anyway, John held the service there, and very fine it was. John is well aware of the issues being discussed here, and one of the customs of the Oakdale grove is that everybody presents a sacrifice. I had not really understood this until the moment was upon me. I quickly knelt (my 62 year old knees were up to the task) and grabbed a bit of grass so as not to break the rhythm. I supposed it looked like I was genuflecting to the Monument

Mike TheFool I've done the grab a nearby-tree, get the sacrifice quick routine before.

Mike TheFool The scenery of the site does play a role. Knowing the directions when you call the winds. Or when I do the Chant to the Earthmother, I call the 5 names of trees based on what is around me, so I identify five species of trees before the service rather than just call out Maple, ELm, Birch, Pine and Oak if they aren't there. A procession is nice if you have a good path. Yep, we worship outside, weather, flora and existing stones are very important for the vibe of the service. Hard to be inspired by Nature if one chooses a parking lot or quarry. And as an old adage goes, "Archery wins out over Archdruidry" when choosing a safe spot.



DEBATE 3: Thoughts on being a Druid:

George: If you do not believe what you claim why should others?

Davin What's the context George?

George Davin, just that it seems so many lack in faith or perhaps practical use of things they claim to belief of try and follow. Rutting through fallen leaves as if that was the whole Forest.

Mike TheFool I would not claim to believe what I don't, but sometimes finely-tuned qualifiers on metaphysical/aesthetic/artistic/inspirational matters are difficult to nuance to others. People want to hear "I believe X, Y, Z", not "I am deeply inspired by the aesthetic symbolism of x, but not in a literal interpretation of Y, or that z is not exclusive of alternative possibilities...." I appreciate different teachings in so many ways, ways that are often changing with reflection, new information, and maturing. I rarely encourage or profess blind faith, non-alterability, or concepts that deny fairly certain scientific principles. Call it hedging, but we Reformed Druids worship bushes, not just trees.

Davin I have no doubt the Ancients, what we might call Druids had no unified consensus either. In spite of what many modern Druids and reconstructionists want. Firstly, how can you enforce dogma without a Pope, and without reading and writing. If you can only talk to another soul one to one, then you need to have respect for them, you need to 'listen'. Ranting won't get

you far. Insisting on the references of Historians was never a Druid activity. They may have learnt the poems of their tribes, but it would have been impossible to be a fundamentalist.

Mike TheFool Control of others (for profit, pleasure or power) through positions of religious authority has probably been around for ages in different form. The tools have changed. I hope that the majority did so primarily for the benefit, comfort and empowerment of their flock... but I have my doubts. Centralized and decentralized religion have their own pros & cons, checks & balances. I have my preferences, as do others.

Davin Yeah, I'd saying bullying has always existed.

George Wise words from all !!! I really do think Ancient Druids if ask to sum up Neo-Druids in one kind word would use "Naive"

Mike TheFool When discussing matters of which you do not know much, it is always wise to acknowledge what one does not know, and the degree of one's certainty or uncertainty. It is a sign of a maturing Reformed Druid who states what he/she doesn't know, and yet continues to seek to understand and learn, but brave enough to express his/her preferences as being such. One cannot remain mute until certainty is achieved, because it is by exploring and discussing that our thoughts are refined and enriched. I would be far behind where I am now if I did not learn from others or had just been satisfied with what I thought I knew fairly well. It takes a grove to raise a Druid and a Druid to raise a grove. we are in it together.

George Well Said Druid-Bard Mike. May every Acorn find their grove.

Jamie Sifting through my own thoughts... maybe it adds or doesn't to the conversation... made me think of my zen buddhist days... a good friend and monk told me that awakening is looking at the moon for yourself. Don't get stuck on someone's finger pointing at the moon. It's just a finger. Folks will get mad that you don't appreciate their finger, or they will demand you point just like them... but they got stuck on the finger and are missing the moon. For me, I appreciate that Reformed Druidism says that Nature does a pretty good job at pointing at the moon, but the rest is up to us. That's very inviting, and I think that a lot of people can dig that. If I had any gripe, it would be that taking the orders are not as available, but that is my own personal hang up, and I shouldn't be getting hung up. May your day be well!

Benjamin I think a lot of people don't really believe what they say they do because they are just repeating what they have been told to believe without thinking about it.

Mary No one should believe what anyone else claims, without seeing good solid evidence for the truth of that claim. Otherwise, it just becomes the, "The Emperor's New Clothes" scenario.

Jamie One of the gems of the buddhist holy texts is called the Kalama Sutta. In it the Buddha talks of the importance of free inquiry. One of my favorite writings for sure!

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/.../soma/wheel008.html>

Kalama Sutta: The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry

www.accesstoinsight.org

The instruction of the Kalamas (Kalama Sutta) is justly famous for its encourage...



DEBATE 4: BUDDHIST DRUID

Oriana Over the past 5 years I have gotten further & further into Buddhist philosophy. I love that I can meld this philosophy so easily with my love of the Mother, her seasons, her subtle and not so subtle beauty and even RDNA. But I am starting to wonder... Am I an Buddhist Druid or a Druid Buddhist?

Stacey Yes.

Kirk zen sure does mesh well with RDNA philosophy

Oriana Concur. I was going through my RDNA binder this morning- before my day went wonky--- and I found a notebook I'd started when I took my 1st order. The first entry is a Buddhist entry on Positive karma. Seems I even started out this way.

Rusty Taoist Sage...

Stacey After spending time with the Frangquists at Beltaine I discovered the RDNA is much more open and relaxed that my ordaining AD taught me.

Oriana Most things are.. (Just sayin')

Stacey <snicker>

Gillian LOL I was describing what I believe to someone today and she said - you sound like a Buddhist. Well, I am in the midst of Druid study and still refer to myself as a witch so I guess I would be a DruBuddItch? Baaaaa - I dunno. I love the earth is all.

Kirk DruBuddItch? Nice!! lol

Gillian LOL say THAT three times fast

Glenn That is a question tending not to edification

Hyla does it matter? Be yourself, whatever it is. We will accept you happily!

Davin Every person can walk the noble eightfold path of the Buddha regardless of religion. This idea of religious exclusivity seems to be dominant in Christian majority countries. Sadly seems to be rife in neopagan circles too with the rise of the dogmatists! Blessed Be!

Jon D RDNA is wide open - look at some of the early Zen writings.

Jon D It is like a bowl - open wide inviting - come and fill it up

Jon D Also, check out Green Book, Volume I, Sayings from the Buddhists

Stacey We like questions, no matter what they are!

Jon D Yes!

Stacey Evening questioning the questions. You get three druids in a room you have four opinions. Glenn's comment made y'all think though, didn't it?

Rob In my humble opinion the universe we're living in is way too complicated and interesting to be completely explained by any one religion. One belief that seems to be rather common in the Asatru community is that even if other people believe things very different from ourselves, that doesn't automatically mean either one is mistaken.

Oriana It was the kind of question I didn't really expect an answer to- already agreeing with all of your comments before you wrote them.

It has become a question of which is more important to me.

The answer at this point must be neither. They are in harmony.

I suppose I thought that maybe writing both out would help me decide.

But I realized as soon as I wrote it. It doesn't matter. Both are equally important.

Maybe I'll be a Druid Buddhist on odd days? LOL

Mike TheFool Zen Buddhism in general has an attitude of silent contemplation, wrestling with questions without answers, spontaneity within routine, simplicity, humbleness. It works particularly well with Zen Druidism when the Druid isn't Theistically oriented, like some pantheon-focused Druids.

Cat I'd call myself a Buddhistic Pagan plant-healer who is studying Druidry and ritual magic, and likes a lot of mystical Christianity and Gnosticism as well.

Or, crazy dog lady works well, too.

Mike TheFool i call myself mike

Ian There's no need to identify with Buddhist tradition to use Buddhist technique. I find many of their ideas on emotional management and happiness to be useful, while I have no real use for their positions on the soul, the purpose of existence or the goal of the work. So, have you become involved in the religious traditions? attending temple, regular practice using eastern cultural forms etc? If you take refuge, then you're surely a Buddhist of sorts. If you aren't going that way, then maybe you're a Pagan studying Buddhism.

Mike TheFool Remember you can only journey half-way into a forest, before you start to come out the other side.... unless you're going in circles...

Cat Well said, Ian. I too find much of the Buddhism I know to contradict my Pagan views on the soul, afterlife, and deity. but I've been practising mindfulness and forgiveness a long, long time.

Oriana I actually like all of Buddhism- except that I do not do temple nor have I taken refuge. I tend to be a non-joiner. Druid studies end for me with the earth mother. I choose no gods and therefore honor all gods equally. I like Mikes comment on non-theistic Druids.

Jerry I would consider all truths to be valuable regardless of where they come from. Taoism has given me may.

Kirk I agree Ian and Cat. I love zen Buddhist meditation techniques and its philosophy of nonviolence, compassion, awareness, mindfulness and emphasis on balance and inner peace. On the other hand Buddhism, like Christianity, tends to take a gloomy or negative outlook on humanity, physical existence and the physical body as being somehow 'base' or a prison and something to be transcended...or at least that's how it comes across to me personally anyway. As a pagan and druid I can't agree with that outlook. I believe nature is good, therefore the earth is good and the physical body is good. So I guess that would make me pagan in beliefs, but with some zen influence in my approach and techniques lol

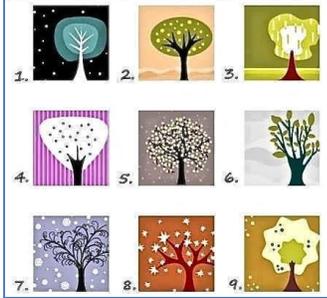
Oriana I used to think that of Buddhism too Kirk, but it has brought me so much more 'in tune'. It's the most positive example in my life. I think more than anything Buddhism teaches reflection. And that without judgement- all things are neutral (vs negative.) life is about happiness. And finding a perspective that provides happiness no matter what 'suffering' is placed in your path. Currently meditating over a cinnamon roll and coffee while the washing machine churns.

Kirk Ommmmmmmmmm.....blueberry muffin here

Mary Mindfulness- yes. "Present moment, wonderful moment."

Gillian Mike I really like what you said yesterday about contemplation without answers, simplicity...and not being Theistically oriented. This speaks to me. I believe I started to feel...inadequate within the "modern pagan" community and certainly within the...See More

Personality Test:



TREE PERSONALITY TEST

Discovered by Elizabeth D.

Don't think about it too long, just choose, see what hits you first, and find out what your choice says about your personality, have FUN and share your choice in the comments. Thank You

The results . . .

1. You are a generous and moral (not to confuse with moralizing) person. You always work on self-improvement. You are very ambitious and have very high standards. People might think that communicating with you is difficult, but for you, it isn't easy to be who you are. You work very hard but you are not in the least selfish. You work because you want to improve the world. You have a great capacity to love people until they hurt you. But even after they do. . . you keep loving. Very few people can appreciate everything you do as well as you deserve.
2. You are a fun, honest person. You are very responsible and like taking care of others. You believe in putting in an honest day's work and accept many work-related responsibilities. You have a very good personality and people come to trust you easily. You are bright, witty and fast-thinking. You always have an interesting story to tell.
3. You are a smart and thoughtful person. You are a great thinker. Your thoughts and ideas are the most important. You like to think about your theories and views alone. You are an introvert. You get along with those who like to think and learn. You spend a lot of time, thinking about morality. You are trying to do what is right, even if the majority of society does not agree with you.
4. You are perceptive and philosophical person. You are a unique, one soul of your kind. Next to you there's no one even slightly similar to you. You are intuitive and a bit quirky. You are often misunderstood, and it hurts you. You need personal space. Your creativity needs to be developed, it requires respect of others. You are a person who clearly sees the light and dark sides of life. You are very emotional.
5. You are self-assured and in charge. You are very independent. Your guiding principle in life is 'I'll do it my way.'. You are very self-reliant and know how to stay strong for yourself and the people you Love. You know exactly what you want and are not afraid of pursuing your dreams. The only thing you demand from people is honesty. You are strong enough to accept the truth.
6. You are kind and sensitive. People relate to you very well. You have many friends and you love helping them. You have this warm and bright aura that makes people feel good when they are around you. Every day, you think about what you can do to improve yourself. You want to be interesting, insightful and unique. More than anybody else in the world, you need to love. You are even ready to love those who don't love you back.
7. You are happy and unflappable. You are a very sensitive and understanding person. You are a great listener who know how to be non-judgmental. You believe that everybody has their own journey in life. You are open to new people and events. You are highly resistant to stress and rarely worry. Normally, you are very relaxed. You always manage to have a good time and never lose your way.
8. You are charming and energetic. You are a fun person who knows how to make people laugh. You live in a state of harmony with the universe. You are spontaneous and enthusiastic. You never say no to an adventure. Often, you end up surprising and even shocking people. But that's just how you are. . . You always remain true to yourself. You have many interests and if something proves of interest to you, you will not rest until you acquire a profound knowledge of this area.
9. You are optimistic and lucky. You believe that life is a gift and you try to achieve as much as possible and put this gift to the best use possible. You are very proud of your achievements. You are ready to stick by the people you care about through thick and thin. You have a very healthy approach to life. The glass is (at least) half full for you. You use any opportunity to forgive, learn, and grow because you believe that life is too short to do otherwise.



When Druids Meet

A guest essay by Searles o'Dubhain

Nov 1, 2013

<http://odubhain.blogspot.com/2013/11/when-druids-meet.html>

When Druids meet, how do they recognize one another? The answer to this question has many answers today because there are many ways that a person can be a Druid. In one of the few references available to us on this subject from antiquity, *The Colloquy of the Two Sages*, we can discover that some of these many ways are as follows:

1. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by detailing the truth of the inner **nature** that caused them to seek to become Druids.
2. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by providing the **traditions** of the studies that formed them into Druids.
3. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by describing their **rank** of attainment in their chosen specialties of Draíocht.
4. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by itemizing the **skills** in the art of Druids that they practice as Druids.
5. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by outlining the **goals** that they've set for themselves as Druids.
6. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by detailing their **accomplishments** in their life as Druids.
7. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by tracing the Druidic **lineage** of their teachers.
8. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by performing **prophecy** that is inspired through imbas.
9. Druids recognize one another through inquiry and by **acknowledging truth** when they see it.

These nine points of being a Druid are clearly provided to us from the Druids of the past in the tales about them and their interactions. I think they ably provide us with three questions that we each need to answer:

- Can we ignore these nine points of being a Druid when we seek to be Druids ourselves?
- Can we afford to ignore discovering them in others who say they are Druids?
- Can we demonstrate them to the world through the truth of our own actions?

When we look for Druids among us or within ourselves, will we find the requisite nature, tradition, rank, skill, goals, accomplishments, lineage, prophecy and truth that is the mark of a Druid? Will we be able to ask and answer the three questions of seeking, discovering and demonstrating? When Druids meet, the knowledge of tradition, experience and inquiry are each validated through the harmony of respect, openness and imbas.

What is demonstrated and meant here is that Druids tell one another what it was that set them on the Druid Way and describe this epiphany of choice in such a way that other Druids can identify and synchronize with it.

Wouldn't you want to know the degrees that a person has as well as their experience if they were going to be your doctor or discuss other professional matters with you in a professional specialty? Wouldn't you want to know the qualifications of your lawyer, your clergy or your doctor? Would you eat in a restaurant that had not been inspected or drive a vehicle without assurances that it was safe to do so?

To evaluate whether a person is actually a Druid, one might consider itemizing their areas of specialty or attempt to understand the techniques or systems that they use. In medicine, this might be reflected in looking for a diploma from a medical school, a license or a certification on the wall. One should hopefully ask if they specialized in surgery before contracting with them for an operation. One might want to know if a doctor practices holistic medicine vs. heavy use of drug therapies, etc. Some of these questions are answered or assured by reputation in the community or by the certifications and regulations for the hospitals and health facilities where doctors are employed and ply their craft.

Establishing a professional relationship with a person or colleague pretty much mandates that one understand their skills and levels of competency. After that, associating with a person is pretty a matter of getting together with like minds who share a common dream and then pulling together in the same direction.

Knowing a person's lineage, school or level of training, is also very helpful in evaluating where a person is coming from.

If the teacher, school or group is already well known, the evaluation of the individual's practice as a Druid might be better understood against that background. Knowing a person is a member of Keltria, ADF or OBOD might suggest something about their overall belief structure and practice.

If the Druids of one's lineage are known, then one's credibility as a Druid is established and measured through that connection. I hope that Druids everywhere consider intelligence to be a great measuring stick, along with truth, intuition and awareness.

I also think that using the various ways that have been listed of evaluating anyone's claims are sensible. What we are talking about here are credentials that are similar to what would be on any resume.

It is a major focus of my work as a Druid to effectively establish credentials and other clear-cut ways of defining who and what we are as Druids. It's my great hope that much of the confusion and hoopla associated with the many who *claim* to be Druids (but who are actually something else) can be eliminated through these (and similar) efforts. That's why some of us in The Summerlands are working toward the establishment of a Druid Seminary.

I suspect that is also why OBOD, Keltria and ADF have improved (and continue to improve) their training courses. I also think that's why the Druid College of Avalon is being established. I

think that we can establish centers of credibility and authority without having to have one central authority. If we do this, I think we will be emulating the ways that the ancient Druids also established and maintained their own centers of learning and authority. Most modern Druid groups are really not that far apart in terms of requiring education and dedication from their members. The traditions mainly differ in regard to degree and point of focus. They also have differing histories and cultural focus, but these are to be expected as they are geographically and culturally separated.

Without some type or center of credibility and authority, anything can be misused or become off-centered. Anyone's claims can be considered as valid as another's. Throwing away standards and definitions opens up order to anarchy. That is why most workable systems and Druid groups have some form of checks and balances as well as a listed way of self-evaluating and regulating.

How this can or is being done is worthy of another thread and further discussion. Maybe some of the more successful groups or schools out there can tell us what their experience has been?

The idea behind having certification is to provide an easy means of determining credentials and capability, even relative authority. These standards should not be considered the "be all and end all" of Druidic society. Rather, they are ways for the general public to get a grasp on what Druids are all about in a fairly uniform and consistent manner.

A feature of such groups should be their ability to recognize individuals who have obtained the necessary standards of excellence on their own as well as through divine inspiration. Here (and also in the case of those who attend regular schools and training) there should be a criteria that establishes what a Druid (no matter the specialty) actually is.

That same yardstick can measure the conventional as well as the unique. In fact, that is one reason I started this thread (to attempt to place some marks of reference on that stick). The Inis Glas Hedge School was an excellent example of a knowledge base that could serve as an educational yardstick for traditional knowledge that a Druid should be expected to have. The ADF, Keltria, AODA and OBOD study programs define levels of knowledge and achievement sufficient for their organization to recognize levels, rings, orders and types of Druids. Some of these are ordered with tree names like Birch, Oak and Yew, while others separate the disciplines as Bard, Ovate and Druid. Each level or ring has its own uniquely defined skills and tests for achievement.

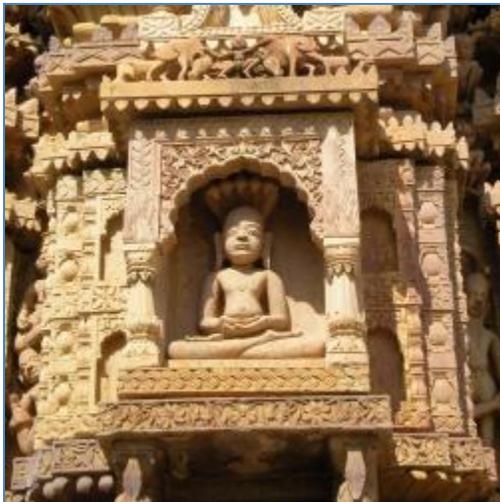
This study, discipline and testing is a traditional requirement for being recognized as a Druid.

In ancient Ireland, an ollamh (in any skill but primarily in law, poetry or priestly duties) was established and recognized through a process of education, examination and installation involving other sages and ollamhs (of that discipline), as well as by the local kings and chieftains. Our recognition of modern Druids should require similar standards of education and achievement that are measured and established by a similar process of recognition by schools, boards and governmental offices today. That is actually how the university system still works in much of the world. That's the way that it should work among us as well.

Perhaps the members of any such board should come from the schools, the leadership of government and from those who are independently acknowledge experts in the field on some rotating basis? That way, we might minimize any one group gaining a control over the process in a restrictive manner? How to do this in balance and fairness is a discussion and an outcome that I eagerly await.

I generally agree with addressing the general warning signs as being red flags about a person's claims and credentials (needs details) but do reserve judgment on ruling out wisdom that is found in unusual, controversial and little known traditions. This does not mean that one should endorse the unusual or the controversial (or even the outright wrong) just because it is different but it does mean that such sources can contain truth beyond conventional wisdom. The unorthodox can inspire us to go beyond the normal and usual into realms of truth that would otherwise be ignored.

Common sense tells us that to be generally accepted knowledge must be evaluated and substantiated through careful research and thorough investigation. In these considerations of the unusual, wisdom is found almost as often from failure as it is through success. Perhaps the list of warnings and red flags should be qualified or limited through accurate definitions while a list of positive affirmations for Druids is also clearly stated? What a Druid is not is equally and more easily understood at times than what it is that defines a person as being a Druid. The negatives often times screen the dreck more efficiently than the positives recognize the jewels.



Two Seasons, Three Worlds, Four Treasures, Five Directions: the Pillars of Celtic Cosmology and Celtic Reconstructionist Druidism

by Ellen Evert Hopman

As most of you are probably aware, the holiest river of Hinduism is the Ganges. But before the Ganges became the focus of religious belief and ritual there was another river that was likely an equally sacred river. That river was the Saraswati around which an entire civilization, known as the Harappan culture flourished from 2500 BCE to 1500 BCE in the Indus River Valley of present day northwest India and Kashmir. Its major cities were Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

The Harappan culture was highly advanced with writing, mathematics, metallurgy, dentistry, stringed instruments, three dimensional sculptures, urban planning, irrigation and drainage, public baths, boats and canals, and a population that was larger than the two kingdoms of

northern and southern Egypt combined. It was a culture that traded widely and lived in peace. Their language was most likely a type of Dravidian.[1]

This culture faced an environmental catastrophe when the climate changed, the rains failed, and their sacred Mother River, the Saraswati dried up. By approximately 2000 BCE the holy river that had run through the heart of this civilization was gone and the Harappan culture began to disperse. What remained of the Harappan culture was absorbed or conquered by Proto-Indo-European or Sanskrit speakers.

Evidence suggests that some of the Harappan peoples moved from Northwest India south into the subcontinent while other Harappans moved northeast into China and Tibet. There is also mounting evidence that yet others of them may have moved west – all the way into Western Europe. What evidence do we have to support this theory? As physical evidence we have the famous Gundestrup Cauldron that was found in a Danish bog in 1891. The provenance for the cauldron is still debated but it was constructed in the first or second century BCE. Despite coming from a Danish bog the cauldron depicts a horned deity surrounded by exotic creatures such as elephants and lions and seated in a yogic pose. The horned deity is Celtic; we know this because he is wearing a torc or neck ring, which is a Celtic symbol of noble status, and holds another torc in his hand. Yet the horned figure closely resembles the Harappan Mohenjo-Daro depictions of Shiva Pashupati, the Lord of the Animals.

In Hindu depictions of Shiva he is often shown meditating with a serpent around his neck to illustrate his absolute fearlessness. Similarly the Gundestrup horned deity is shown clutching a serpent.

(See Images from my article “Encounters with the Horned God” in Bond of Druids: A Druid Journal, Summer 2008 <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/danac/2-bodsummer2008.pdf> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Image-Pashupati.jpeg>)

Further parallels can be found between European, Vedic and Indus Valley cultures and I will speak primarily about the Celts because that culture is most relevant to my own faith which is Druidism.

The sacred mother river along which Celtic culture developed called the Danube is named for the Celtic Goddess Danu. The same Goddess gave her name to the Don River, the Dneiper, and others. Danu is also an early Hindu Goddess of the primeval waters. In the Rig Veda she is called the mother of the Danavas, or the Children of Danu.

The Celtic peoples developed a caste system of the “Nemed” or “Sacred” class of Druids who were the equivalent of Brahmins, warriors who were equivalent to the Kshatriyas, farmers and producers, and slaves who did the same menial tasks as the “Untouchable” castes of India. In common with Hindu and Vedic cultures where until the tenth century, one could move up or down the social ladder, advancing in status as one gained education or skills, the ancient Celtic caste system was fluid providing opportunities for advancement and also loss of status depending on education and other circumstances.

The Celts and Hindu-Vedic peoples shared other similarities such as the primacy of triple deities. In Celtic religious thought the most powerful deities were always personified in threes; the triple Brigid for example, who was the most popular pan-Celtic Goddess. She was personified as three Brigid's; Brigid the Patroness of smiths and the forge, Brigid the Patroness of healing and Brigid the Patroness of poets. Similarly there was Lugh Samildanach, the God of every art, who was born as one of triplets. The triple War Goddess known as The Morrígan was often personified as three ravens, three crows or three Great Queens named Morrígan, Badb, and Nemain. The Land Goddess of ancient Ireland was a triple deity; Banba, Fodla and Ériu. In Celtic Gaul the Matronae were the "Triple Mothers" who brought the blessings of plants, food and healthy children to the tribes. Thus the number three implied High Gods, divinity and completion.

(See image of Gaulish Matronae from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bibracte_Deesses.jpg)

These triple deities can be compared to the Hindu Trimurti; Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu and to the Tridevi; Shakti, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Druidic religious and philosophical teachings were similar to Vedic and Hindu beliefs as well. The Druids taught the doctrine of reincarnation according to contemporary witnesses and historians. Pomponius Mela reported that the Druids taught reincarnation to strengthen the courage of the warriors. He wrote that; "One of their dogmas has become widely known so they may the more readily go to wars: namely that souls are everlasting, and that among the shades is another life."

Ammianus Marcellinus wrote; "The Druids . . . declared souls to be immortal" while Diodorus Siculus said; "The Pythagorean doctrine prevails among them, teaching that the souls of men are immortal and live again for a fixed number of years inhabited in another body." And in the first century, Lucan addressed the Druids rhetorically with these words... "You tell us that the same spirit has a body again elsewhere, and that death, if what you sing is true, is but the midpoint of long life".

We can find yet more parallels between the sacred scriptures of the Celtic and Hindu religion. In "The Song of Amaigen" from the eleventh century "Lebor Gabála Érenn" ("Book of Invasions"), a book composed of a mixture of pseudo-history and oral lore passed down through the generations in which the poet declares;

"I am the Wind that blows across the Sea; I am the Wave of the Ocean; I am the Murmur of the Billows; I am the Bull of the Seven Combats; I am the Vulture on the Rock; I am a Ray of the Sun; I am the Fairest of Flowers; I am a Wild Boar in Valor; I am a Salmon in the Pool; I am a Lake on the Plain; I am the Skill of the Craftsman; I am a Word of Science; I am the Spear-point that gives Battle; I am the God who creates in the head of man the Fire of Thoughts..."

This can be compared to The Bhagavad-Gita where Sri Krishna says;

"I am the Self established in the heart of all contingent beings:

I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all contingent beings too...”[2]

and

“...Among luminous bodies I am the sun...among heavenly mansions I am the moon...and Meru among the high-aspiring mountains...of floods I am the ocean...of immovable things I am the Himalaya...I am the lion among beasts...the Ganges among rivers...I am endless time itself, and the Preserver whose face is turned on all sides...I am, O Arjuna, the seed of all existing things, and there is not anything, whether animate or inanimate which is without me...”[3]

Added to all this is the fact that Celtic religion featured offerings to sacred fire, sacred water and trees, while Vedic ritual involved making offerings to sacred fire (Agni), and sacred water (Soma) and the use of a pole in their rites. The sickle was also a ritual implement used by both Druids and Brahmanic priests. The evidence is mounting that there is a common Vedic or proto-Vedic thread that runs through Indo-European religious beliefs.

So having explored the deepest tap roots of what I perceive to be our closely woven origins, now I would like to look at the basic principles of Celtic Cosmology as they are understood by modern Celtic Reconstructionist Druids of today.

Two Seasons

The first principle is the division of the sacred year. For the ancient Celts there were only two seasons; summer and winter, or the light half of the year and the dark half of the year. The dark half began at Samhain or as it is known in modern times “Halloween” or “All Souls Day” while the light half began at Beltaine or as it is known in modern times “May Day”. These two festivals were the holiest days of the Celtic year, acting as portals between dark and light, between one state of existence and another. They were times of chaos and change when Spirits were said to move freely between the worlds and communication with dead ancestors was most easily achieved.

Both of these festivals were centered around the activities of cows. At Beltaine the cows were sent to their summer pastures in the hills, while at Samhain the cows were brought back to the comforts of their winter enclosures. At Beltaine the departing cows were ritually blessed by passing them between two sacred fires as they left the farm. The fires were supposed to be close enough that a white cow passing between them would have her hair singed brown. Cows were thought of as lunar, watery animals that produced the all important liquid called milk that would later make butter and cheese for the tribes. By passing the cows through the fires, water and fire were brought together which was seen as a powerful form of magic because the ancient Celts believed that the world was made of fire and water and wherever these two elements came together there was the possibility for transformation, creation and powerful change.

In between Beltaine and Samhain there were two other high festivals. Imbolc, which happened in early February, was held in honor of the great Triple Goddess Brighid. It was also a milk festival that celebrated the lactation of the ewes. Lughnasad was the celebration of the first fruits of the

harvest. It was observed from late July to mid August, depending on when the new grain was ripe. At this festival horses, which were understood to be solar creatures of fire, were ritually cleansed by driving them through living water such as a lake or a stream and once again fire and water were brought together to empower the world. Horse races and other games of skill and competition as well as great fairs and poetry contests marked the occasion. This festival honored the God Lugh who was “master of every art” and his foster mother Tailtiu, who can be understood to represent the Earth Mother herself.

Three Worlds

For the Celts there were three worlds that existed simultaneously and which were intertwined with each other to make up the whole of existence. The world of “Sea” or water was the underworld of the ancestors and the Sidhe or Fairies. This world was under the earth but could be accessed through water; hence offerings were dropped into water such as lakes, ponds, wells and streams, as gifts for the Fairy Realms and for the honored dead.

The world of “Land” was the sacred realm of plants, trees, animals, stones and humans. Some of the inhabitants of this world such as stones and trees were especially venerated because a stone could be half underground and half above ground and thus reside between two worlds, while a tree had its roots in the underworld of Water, its trunk in the realm of Land and branches that touched the Sky Realm. Offerings were made to sacred trees and stones to honor their existence between the realms. Deeply rooted trees such as ashes and oaks and stones that projected from the earth were understood to be liminal objects of power that could help a person to travel between the worlds. Rituals were performed in the presence of such trees and stones for this reason.

The world of “Sky” was the domain of the Sky Gods and Goddesses, of Thunder Gods such as Taranis and of the winged raven and crow emissaries of the Triple Goddess of Battle, the Morrígan. Solar deities such as Belenos and Aine were honored with fire offerings. Lugh and Brighid, who were Master and Mistress of Arts and associated with fire, were honored at the forge and at the fire altar. Offerings were made to sacred fires to reach the Sky Realm, because the fires carried the offerings upwards, via the smoke.

For the Celts the symbol that best encapsulated these three realms of existence was a tree, because of the tree’s ability to span the worlds. Every tribe had a Bile or sacred tree under which oaths were sworn. Such a tree was simultaneously a church, a court house and a meeting place for elders, tribal leaders and Druids. The health and luck of the community was tied to the tree and the worst thing that could befall a community was to have their sacred tree cut down.

The three realms were also understood to exist within the human form. There were said to be three cauldrons within the human body; the “Cauldron of Wisdom” in the head, the “Cauldron of Motion” in the chest and the “Cauldron of Incubation” in the abdomen.

The Cauldron of Wisdom in the head was said to be born upside down in all people and was gradually turned upright by training and by divine intervention. The Cauldron of Motion in the chest was said to be born on its side in most people. It was the origin of emotions and of poetic

art and had to be turned fully upright in order to achieve artistic mastery. The Cauldron of Incubation in the belly was the seat of warming, sustenance and health. In a healthy person it was said to be upright while in a sick person it lay on its side. This cauldron was turned completely upside down at death. These Three Cauldrons are comparable to three major chakras within the human body.

In the ancient poem “The Cauldron of Poesy”, another composition attributed to Amairgen White-knee, the three cauldrons are described in this manner;

“My perfect cauldron of warming has been taken by the Gods from the mysterious abyss of the elements; a perfect truth that ennobles from the center of being, that pours forth a terrifying stream of speech...

The Gods do not give the same wisdom to everyone, tipped, inverted, right-side-up; no knowledge, half-knowledge, full knowledge --

What then is the root of poetry and every other wisdom? Not hard; three cauldrons are born in every person -- the cauldron of warming, the cauldron of motion and the cauldron of wisdom.

The cauldron of warming is born upright in people from the beginning. It distributes wisdom to people in their youth.

The cauldron of motion, however, increases after turning; that is to say it is born tipped on its side, growing within.

The cauldron of wisdom is born on its lips and distributes wisdom in poetry and every other art....

The cauldron of motion then, in all artless people is on its lips. It is side-slanting in people of bardcraft and small poetic talent. It is upright in the greatest of poets, who are great streams of wisdom. Not every poet has it on its back, for the cauldron of motion must be turned by sorrow or joy.

There are two divisions of joy that turn the cauldron of wisdom; divine joy and human joy....[4]

Four Treasures

By tradition the Tuatha de Dannan or the Children of Danu, flew in from the north bringing their four treasures with them; the Sword of Nuada, the Cauldron of the Daghdha, the Spear of Lugh and the Lia Fail or Stone of Destiny.

Of the Sword of Nuada it was said that no one could escape it once it was unsheathed. But a sword was not just a battle implement in ancient times. A sword had practical uses such as cutting meat, hacking brush, digging, carving, reaping, cutting and shaping of objects. It was a symbol of wisdom, skill, creativity, honor, truth and discernment. In legends a noble sword uncovered truth and slayed falsehood.

The Cauldron of the Daghdha was said to be a magical inexhaustible container of food from which no one left unsatisfied and Druids were said to be able to bring slain warriors back to life by dipping them into magical cauldrons of healing. Cups and drinking horns were related symbols that held magical and nourishing liquids from the Gods and which were containers for

the magical wisdom of the Otherworld and the mysteries of nature. The legends of the quest for the Holy Grail are a remembrance of these mystical objects.

The Spear of Lugh was said to make its bearer invincible, it belonged to the bright shining God who was “Master of Every Art”. While Lugh was a great warrior he was also a magician, a goldsmith, a harper, a healer and many other things besides. His bright spear symbolized mastery of talents, the growth of wisdom, intense focus on a skill or an art, profound intelligence, the fire of Otherworldly inspiration, the fires of thought and the fire in the head.

The Stone of Fal or the Lia Fáil was the magical coronation stone that roared when the true king put his feet upon it. A “Lia” is a worked or inscribed stone, not a rough natural stone. With its base in the ground and its top in the air it is a boundary marker between one world and another just as the true king must be a bridge from this world to the divine realms. The color of the stone is grey, symbolic of wisdom and knowledge and a “Fail” is an enclosure or protective ring that surrounds and guards the kingdom. Thus this stone, which was said to reside at Tara and which was later taken to Scotland (and then purloined by the English crown) is an ancient stone that has been inscribed in a sacred and mysterious way so that it guards the kingdom. When the true ruler, one who is a wise and a true protector of the land approaches it will speak out clearly. Until then the stone will stay silent, holding its secrets and guarding their power for the rightful king who is to come.

Five Directions

There were as many as twelve directions that were recognized as significant by the Celts, we know this because there were twelve winds or “Airts” that were recognized for their unique effects upon the land and the people [5]. But for religious purposes there were five major directions that are still found in the myths and stories [6].

The North was the direction of battle and fire; its emblem was the sword and its creature the eagle. It was the direction of warriors and of Gods. Winds from the north presaged strife and conflict.

The East was the direction of abundance and prosperity. Its emblems were wealth of all kinds; good earth, fine clothing, bees and honey, its creature the salmon.

The South was the Goddess direction, associated with water and creative arts such as music and poetry. Its creature was the sow, an animal that roots deep into the dark earth for inspiration and sustenance, bringing hidden treasures to light.

The West was the place of history keeping, story telling, of illumination, of inner fire, and of learning and of passing on the mysteries. It was the airy direction of the intellect. Its creature was the stag.

The Center was the fifth sacred direction that completed a ritual space. Its emblem was the stone, its creature the Mare of Sovereignty who symbolized the Goddess of the Land. It was the place of mastery and of rulership. Five was the number that implied a sacred whole.

These five directions are mirrored in the Mount Meru of Hindu Cosmology where the four continents are said to be arranged around a mythical central mountain whose roots penetrate the same distance under the ocean as its peak rises to the sky.

While Modern Druids of today are actively searching out the ancient proto-Vedic roots that the Hindu religion and the Celtic religion hold in common we are also turning to intact, living Earth Religions such as Native American traditions and Siberian Shamanism for clues as to how to revive the ancient European Earth-centered tribal ways. There are many parallels to be found in Native American fire altars, prayers to water, reverence for sacred animals, plants and trees, and the recognition that women as well as men can be tribal leaders, medicine people and clergy [7]. It is an exciting time to be a participant in the Celtic Reconstructionist effort to reconnect with our ancient tribal ways and to honor the Earth and Her creatures.

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A version of this lecture is available as a DVD from EE Hopman, POB 219, Amherst, MA 01004, USA, for \$20.00 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling

Visit Ellen Evert Hopman online at <http://www.EllenEvertHopman.com> where you will find links to her books, videos, articles and Druid blog.

Notes

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization, under "historical context and linguistic affiliation" Accessed 09/2009
2. Zaehner, R. C. The Bhagavad-Gita, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, P. 297
3. Judge, William Q., The Bhagavad-Gita, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, 1971 PP. 73-76
4. From excerpts translated by Erynn Rowan Laurie. See the full text and an updated version at <http://www.madstone.com/Pages/cauldronpoesy.html>
5. See this list of Winds in the Early Christian text 'Saltair na Rann', Canto 1, quatrains 12 to 24.
6. For a thorough discussion of these see Alwyn and Brinley Rees' "Celtic Heritage", Thames and Hudson, NY, 1994
7. For evidence on female Druids in ancient times please see "Female Druids" by Ellen Evert Hopman <http://themagicalbuffet.com/blog1/2008/02/29/female-druids/>





The Best Way to Make Acorn Flour

By Hank Shaw on September 26, 2013

Every year I learn more about working with acorns, but each year I come to more and more conclusions. The latest is that there is really only one good way to make quality acorn flour: Cold leaching.

Wha? Leaching, as is pulling something out. In this case, that something is tannin, which in almost all acorns is there in spades. Different acorns have different levels of tannins, but in general oaks of the red oak family have more, the white oak family less. One, the Emory oak of the Sonoran Desert, has almost none at all.

Before I go much further, let me answer the question in many of your minds: Why the hell would I bother making flour from acorns? First, flavor. It's a lot like chestnut flour: Nutty, a little sweet and just generally interesting. Second, nutrition. Acorns vary in nutrition. Some are very starchy, some oily, a few high in protein. Third, it's just kinda fun to make something useful and tasty out of something many of us mistakenly believe is poisonous.



In my [original post about eating acorns](#), I recommended the boiling water method of leaching out all those bitter tannins. This works fine, and is comparatively fast; you can have a batch of acorns leached in the time it takes to watch a football game, which is about three hours for those of you who have never actually watched a football game.

The problem? The resulting acorn flour is very dark, and the boiling process destroys a key starch in the acorns — a starch that acts a lot like gluten in wheat, i.e., it helps the acorn flour stick to itself, or to thicken gravy or a roux.

I have found myself using acorn flour mostly for making roux, coating meats or as a flour additive in baked goods and pasta. So that starch is pretty important to me.

Cold leaching solves this problem. It preserves the starches and, when dried properly, keeps the flour lighter — closer to whole wheat than that dark chocolate brown you can get with boiling water-leached flour. The tradeoff is time. It takes at least a few days to “clean” your flour, and it can take more than a week.

But it's easy time. All you need to do is tend your flour once a day. Here's how to go about it.

Photo by Hank Shaw

Start with acorns. I know, obvious, right? But know that they need not be fresh. Last summer I made a batch of flour from some red oak acorns I'd picked the previous October. I'd laid them out in a shallow layer in a large tray and just let them dry out. When it came time to crack the shells, it was *so much easier* than with fresh acorns; fresh acorn shells are pliable, and don't crack like, say, a hazelnut's shell. You will need to soak your shucked acorns in water overnight, though — and it's the devil to get the papery skins off dried acorns. But hey, the flour was still really good in the end.

Regardless, shuck your acorns into water. This helps prevent them from oxidizing. I find that if I leave acorn nutmeats out, they turn brown over time. If they are fresh acorns, the papery skins should slip right off once the acorn has soaked a bit.



Photo by Hank Shaw

If you have some acorns with worm-eaten bits, you can cut off the bad part if you want to and toss the good part into the bucket of water.

Once your acorns are all shucked, put enough of them to fill a blender or food processor (use a food processor if your blender isn't too strong) up about 1/3 of the

way. Add enough water to fill the bowl of the processor or blender up halfway. Buzz the crap out of it until you get what looks like a coffee milkshake. Play a mean trick on your friends by pouring them some, and watch the hilarity.



Photo by Hank Shaw

Now, you will need a large container. The absolute perfect container to my mind are those big glass jars you get at the Asian market to make kimchi. You can buy [gallon glass jars](#) online or in many hardware store for about \$15. Pour the “coffee milk shake” into the big jar and keep adding more until you have about 50 percent ground acorns and 50 percent water. Cap the jar.

Put the jar into the fridge and walk away. Each morning, pour off the water, being careful to not lose too much of your acorn flour. Refill the jar, cap it and shake the hell out of it, turning it upside down to make sure all the acorn flour is suspended in the water. Repeat as necessary.

You know your acorn flour is ready when you roll some around in your mouth and it tastes really bland. Not tannic or bitter at all. Roasting can eliminate a little bit of tannin, but we're not roasting in this case, so you want the flour to be as "clean" as possible.

For Valley oak acorns, Eastern white oak acorns or other "sweet" acorns, this process could take as few as three days. But 5 days is more normal. California blue oaks take about a week. And my red oak acorns? They took 10 days. When in doubt, go another day.



Now you have a bunch of soaking wet flour. First thing you will need is cheesecloth. Any supermarket will have it, but I have taken to using real cheesecloth, i.e., cloth actually used in cheesemaking. You can buy [real cheesecloth](#) online or in specialty shops.

Line a fine-mesh strainer with some cheesecloth and set it over the sink. Pour the water in the jar through it, catching all the flour.

Photo by Hank Shaw



Squeeze the cloth tight around the flour to extract as much water as possible. This is why I use real cheesecloth — the cheap stuff at most supermarkets is too porous and thin to do the job very well, forcing you to squeeze less and spend more time drying — and the longer the drying time, the darker the flour. You will be left with what looks a lot like a ball of clay.

Now you need to really dry your flour, unless you plan on making something with it right away. I never do this.

Spread your wet flour on a baking sheet, or on a solid dehydrator tray. I prefer the dehydrator because I can dry at a lower temperature. Or, if you do this in summer, you can dry outdoors or in a hot garage.

Dry at as low a temperature as you can. I use a dehydrator set at 100°F. Check in on your flour every few hours, turning it over so it dries evenly. This can take anywhere from an hour to a day. You want the flour to be dead dry. No moisture.

You are almost there. You now have what is essentially acorn "corn meal," a gritty, coarse "flour" you can use to make polenta with; it's pretty good, actually. But to make real flour you need to grind it one more time.

To turn your acorn polenta into acorn flour, grind the dried meal in a spice grinder, coffee grinder, or, best yet, a Vitamix fitted with dry blades. This is what I use, and it is worth every penny. If you have a flour sifter this is a good time to break it out. Grind and sift into a clean bowl until you have nothing but pure, powdery goodness. A typical coffee grinder will require about 35 seconds of grinding to get there.

Your acorn flour is mildly fragile, especially if you are dealing with high fat acorns, like blue oaks and red oaks. I store mine in quart Mason jars in the fridge or freezer. Stored this way, the flour will last for two years or more — which is good, because oaks don't drop huge amounts of acorns every year.

Does all this sound like a lot of work? Well, I won't lie to you: It was. A huge amount of work that made me very, very aware about how we take regular wheat flour for granted. I can guarantee you I will not be tossing around acorn flour the way I would with all-purpose. It's too precious.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUlrcii0ljs&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLE909F040D4E463B9>

How to make some Mead today -the cheap, fast, and easy way

Mead is a wonderful and delicious wine brewed from honey rather than grapes and it is real easy to make. But typically you have to buy some specialized items like an airlock and a glass carboy. I will show you how with one trip to the supermarket you can have a batch

of Mead brewing today.

If you ever wanted to home brew your own wine but thought it seemed too complicated here is a great way to get a first batch going with very little fuss and very little cost. You won't have to order anything special and in no time at all you will have about four bottles of wine that you made yourself. First let's take a trip to the supermarket.

Does this cheap, easy and fast recipe really work? It sure does. I got an email from somebody who tried it. Here is a quote of what he had to say about this process:

*" Will,
After reading your page I was inspired to try making mead. It looked so simple.
Besides the store bought mead that we can buy around Minneapolis doesn't even
taste like mead.*

*I just have to say that I used your suggested method of making mead and was
shocked. I made sure I bought only things available in my local Cub super market
and I created 3 one gallon batches, one with vanilla, one with mint and one with
pomegranate juice. I substituted apple juice for some of the water also.
The result after 6 months was 3 batches of clear mead that tasted great. I did add
a few tablespoons of honey into each bottle at the end to give it a little raw
sweetness. The taste is very similar to the mead sold at a local fair for \$5 a 6
ounce glass, where my mead only cost me about 50 cents for the same glass full.*

My friends that are "Mead Masters" are amazed that I got the results I did without any boiling, chemicals, carboys, airlocks or expensive yeasts. In fact one friend was so impressed that he gave me a five gallon carboy and airlock so I can use the recipe on a larger scale. " -Jim (DragonMyst)

Here is a picture of everything you need. This pic was submitted by Andy who is now officially a Mead Maker. Thanks Andy!



Ingredients List to purchase from the Supermarket:

- 1 Gallon of Spring Water (room temperature, do not get refrigerated)
- 3 pounds of honey – pure unprocessed
- 1 bag of balloons big enough to stretch over the mouth of the spring water jug
- 1 package of Fleischmann's Yeast
- 1 box of raisins
- 1 Orange

Here are some suggestions for variations in this recipe

If you can't get Fleischmann's Yeast here are some perfectly suitable alternates: Narbonne Yeast (Lalvin 71B-1122), Lalvin D-47, or Montpelier Lalvin (K1V-1116)

If you would like to add a bit of spice to this recipe you could add 1 or 2 cloves. But be careful, they are very strong so don't put more than 2.

How to make the Mead

Pour about half of the water into a clean container then slice up your orange into eighth's and put the slices, honey, twenty-five raisins, and the yeast into the jug. Pour some water back into the jug so the level is a couple of inches from the top then put the cap on it and shake it up well. If you can, you should shake it for a good five minutes. This will aerate the mixture. The yeast really needs lots of oxygen to grow vigorously.

Now poke a pinhole in the top of the balloon, remove the cap from your jug and put the balloon right over the mouth of the jug. Stretch the open end of the balloon right over the jug so that as the gases form inside the jug they will inflate the balloon. Put a rubber band or tape around the neck to keep it firmly in place -if it feels like it might come off. Leave it out on a counter for the first day so you can monitor it.

(Note: The balloon can age and oxidize over time so you should inspect it regularly to make sure it doesn't break down and develop cracks. If it seems like it is breaking down replace it with a new balloon! - My thanks to Tim for submitting this tip)

What will happen next?

Somewhere between an hour and twenty-four hours later the balloon will start to inflate. This is a great sign and it means that your yeast is transforming the contents of the jug into wine. Gases are forming inside the jug and are escaping through the pinhole. This setup insures gases escape but no contaminants get into your brew. If the balloon is getting big you may need to poke another hole or two in it. You don't want it to burst. It would leave your mead open to contamination. Once you are satisfied that the gases are escaping and the balloon is not under unusual stress you can set the jug in a cool dry place like a kitchen cabinet or closet shelf. Check on it every day if you can just to make sure it is ok and the balloon hasn't popped off.

After two to three weeks the major portion of the ferment will be done and the balloon will be limp. At this point you can taste a little bit to see how it is coming along but it isn't really a tasty wine at this point. It will need another couple of months to start to get delicious. Over time, as you check on it you will notice that the cloudiness disappears and it slowly clarifies and transforms into wine.

The Orange and the raisins can stay in the mixture for the whole duration but if you want to make the mead a little milder and help it clarify faster you can transfer the liquid into another gallon jug and place the balloon on that one. This would be after the two to three week ferment period has completed. This process is called racking and it will move your mead along nicely.



Here is a picture of the completed batch. Now it is time to just sit back and watch the yeast do its thing! Pic submitted by Andy.

Some Tips

You can make the honey easier to pour by letting it stand in a sink or bowl of warm water. And you can experiment with the flavor a bit by adding a cinnamon stick or a pinch of nutmeg to the batch when you add the orange. Don't leave out the raisins. They are not there for taste. They are a necessary food for the yeast because honey is a bit low in

the nutrients that yeast like. If the honey is a bit expensive you can cut this down to two pounds. Any quantity between two and three and a half pounds will work well and the more honey you put the sweeter the mead will be. But, the more honey you put the longer it will take to mature.

Finally

Be patient and taste your mead every few weeks. It should be really clear and delicious after a few months. It will continue to age and improve over a long period of time so the longer you wait the better it will get. If you are struggling with this then you should probably make another batch! Try to wait six months if you can!

Addendum to this tutorial on mead making: The importance of Sanitation

One of the most important aspects of mead making is sanitization. It is very important that you sanitize everything when you are making mead. Let me explain why!

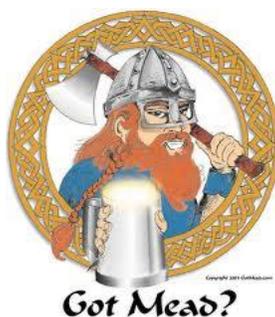
When mixing up your honey, water and other things you are making a food environment. It is a place loaded with nutrients for yeast and that means it can be easy for other types of unwanted yeast or bacteria to quickly grow! It's almost like a little incubator :) What you want is to make sure no outside yeast or cells develop other than the yeast you pitch. This means you should sanitize everything that comes in contact with your new batch of mead including the jug, spoons and measuring cups.

Doing this sanitizing will add a little extra work but it is well worth it. It greatly improves your chances of making a wonderful tasting mead.

The Nuts and Bolts of Sanitizing Mead:

I have a video you can watch that will help you understand sanitation here: [Sanitization of Mead](#)
I use store bought wine making chemical for sanitizing and you can easily get around this by using Chlorine Bleach and here is an article that will help you: [Using Bleach for sanitizing food equipment](#) In summary:

"about one tablespoon (1/2 fluid ounce, 15 ml) of typical chlorine bleach per gallon of water is the maximum that should be used for sanitizing food contact surfaces, according to federal regulation".



NEWS



Plants With Spirit

By *MICHAEL TORTORELLO*

New York Times

October 30, 2013

Twenty years ago, I made an accidental hajj to a founding site of American Druidism. We called it the Hill of Three Oaks and that's what it was. The main attractions were Ultimate Frisbee and beer — an improbable pairing, best left to the elite class of

frolickers.

What I didn't know at the time was that some of the first Druid gatherings in the United States also took place on the Hill of Three Oaks, at a small Minnesota prairie school called Carleton College. There, 50 years ago, a group of freethinking students discovered a way to evade Sunday's mandatory chapel service. They invented a church of their own: the [Reformed Druids of North America](#).

How this prankish act of protest turned into an earnest religious movement is [a tale for another day](#). One simple lesson, however, is that it doesn't take much to form a genuine Druid sanctuary. Start with what you've got in the backyard, said [Ellen Evert Hopman](#), a Druid herbalist and author. "Every tree is a church," she said. "The roots of the tree go down to the Sidhe realm — the fairy domain, the underworld. The branches go up to the sky world of the gods. And the trunk is in the middle: the realm of the nature spirits, the humans and the animals."

Celtic lore held the white oak to be a signpost for the otherworld, she said. During Samhain, the Druid festival devoted to the ancestors, Ms. Hopman will "make offerings to the oak tree" from her garden: dried lavender, rose petals, fruits, mushrooms. "Anything nature would like," she said.

In "A Druid's Herbal of Sacred Tree Medicine" (Destiny Books, 2008), Ms. Hopman lays out the sacred properties of all the trees that make up the ogham, an inscribed and coded alphabet of the ancient Celts. If you're not ready to plant a full Druid arboretum, though, "you've got to have a hawthorn." This was an important plant for Beltane, the May Day festival. "Back in the time before the Internet," she said, "you knew it was summer because the hawthorn bloomed. That meant it was safe to send the cows up to the hills."

These days, sadly, not everyone has a cow (or a hill). Yet the old gods can send signs through a more familiar device. [The Druid Oracle Cards](#) is an iPhone app from [Philip Carr-Gomm](#), the chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. It lists the magical properties for dozens of herbs. Can the mugwort weed on the lawn also open your third eye to prophecy? And why does that crow keep landing on the barbecue? All secrets will be revealed in the Apple store.

Though you may not have stepped outside, your Druid prayer garden is almost complete. Ms. Hopman said: “The next step is some water — like a bowl of water, or a stream if you’re lucky. And some kind of fire. If you have fire, water and tree, that’s the full ceremonial get-up right there!”

Until, that is, you’re ready to break ground on a stone circle.



Ashley Bryner, senior Druid at CedarLight Grove, a Druid parsonage and prayer garden in Baltimore, sets up the stone circle.

If a Druid Rings the Doorbell

By *MICHAEL TORTORELLO*

New York Times

October 30, 2013

How will you be celebrating Samhain this year? What’s that? You say you won’t be observing the high Druid holiday of the ancient Celts? With all due respect, you’re probably wrong and you probably will.

“Samhain is [Halloween](#); Halloween is Samhain,” said Ellen Evert Hopman, 61, an author, herbalist and Druid priestess and scholar. Irish monks, by most accounts, co-opted the earthy ritual and recast it with strait-laced saints. But the bones of the holiday wouldn’t stay buried.

The first historical record of Samhain, an engraved bronze calendar found in Coligny, France, dates to the first century B.C. The Druids of the British Isles went to ground a few centuries later, after the Romans rode in on chariots and “trashed the place,” Ms. Hopman said. All the same, she said: “There have been people celebrating Samhain in Europe for thousands of years. It never ended. Now it’s coming back with a vengeance, as more and more people turn back to the old ways to honor the Earth.”

The holiday may share its DNA with Halloween, but the two are about as closely related as a toy poodle and a wolf. Where modern Halloween is mercantile, Samhain is magical; where Halloween is juvenile, Samhain is adult. Or try this: You celebrate Halloween by nibbling on candy; you celebrate Samhain by pouring whiskey over a bonfire.

That’s the bottle service this Friday night, when [CedarLight Grove](#) celebrates in its parsonage and prayer garden. This house of worship is a clapboard fourplex on a residential street in northeastern Baltimore. Out in the yard, the Druids will circle around their World Tree, a green ash that connects the underworld, the heavens and the mortal realm. The officiants will make offerings at the “well” (here, an enamel bowl: the last thing the yard needs is a mosquito pond). And they will recite bardic tales around the fire.

The service, which is [open to the public](#), will invoke a pantheon of deities with names like the Morrigan (the corpse-picking queen of the battlefield) and the Dagda (her erstwhile mate, the all-father). For their religious garments, the Druids are shooting for a Southern steampunk look, inspired by the band [Delta Rae](#).

Samhain is probably the most popular of the eight annual Druid festivals, said Taryn Lyon, 27, the grove's "scribe" and a member of the witan, or vestry. "Just like there are Christmas Christians, there are Samhain Druids and pagans," she said.

How many folks will spend the next few days and nights worshipping the old gods? The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey put the number of American Druids at 29,000. But then, many Druids connect with the practice of paganism, and the survey counted 340,000 souls in this category. Add another 342,000 wiccans (fellow travelers), and Samhain starts to look like a pretty big party. Of course, that number would swell if you were to include the ancestors who have passed on — and Druids do, especially in this liminal season.

These days, Samhain (pronounced SOW-in) lasts from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2. The old Celtic calendar seemingly cleaved the year into two seasons, the dark half and the light. This was a harvest festival, then, and perhaps a New Year's revel as well.

Ms. Hopman said: "It's the time of year when everything is dying back, the vegetation is dying back. In the old days, people would assess how much fodder they had to feed the animals in the winter. And they'd judge how many animals they would keep and how many they would slaughter. There's a lot of death going on."

She continued: "It's a time of chaos. And when things break down like that, that's when the spirit world can bleed through more easily."

The holiday is one of the occasions when Ms. Hopman expects to encounter the fairies who share her wooded backyard, an oak forest of some 25 acres on a mountaintop near Amherst, Mass. On Samhain, a few members of her small Druid grove, Tribe of Oak, will proceed through the trees to a Colonial bridge above a stream, and then to a natural stone circle. It's two-way traffic, as the path is also a kind of fairy "superhighway," she said. Some friends have sighted them, and "I've heard them singing."

Ms. Hopman keeps an altar on the west lawn of her bucolic house. (Or maybe a better word to describe it is primitive: "The house that I live in used to be a chicken coop and a pigsty," she said.) "I'll put food out for them," she said of her magical guests from the Sidhe realm — that is, the otherworld or the fairy kingdom. "On Samhain, that's very traditional."

An animistic streak runs through Druidry. There is a spirit in everything that exists in nature — the trees, the rocks, the waters — and it's possible to think of fairies as a metaphor. But why stop there?

"Walt Disney came up with the idea of Tinker Bell," Ms. Hopman said. "That's not what fairies are. They're large, they can be very scary. There are some that overlie entire landscapes. They're

huge. Some live under the ground, like the mound behind my house. You can feel them. You go to a hill and you know they're under there. Sometimes it feels like there's a whole city under there!"

This chthonian belief — that the world's underbelly rumbles with life — guides all the so-called Earth-based faiths. Practically, it means that the rituals of Samhain belong outdoors, whether in a wood or a home garden.

Or, say, Central Park. That's where the New York Druid congregation called [Inis Ull-Apple Isle Grove](#), ADF will gather this Saturday afternoon for a public celebration. In August, the group earned its charter from the 30-year-old Druid denomination called [Ar nDriocht Fein](#) (a.k.a. A Druid Fellowship). It currently numbers 14 members, most of them from around the city. (Long Island and Connecticut have their own groves: the ancestors presumably don't mind commuting.)

Peter Coughlin, 47, one of Apple Isle's founders and the senior Druid, describes a Samhain ceremony that will include music on guitar and drum, and offerings of prayer and verse. The participants will also be moving around a lot, Mr. Coughlin said. "We're going to be walking a repeating pattern of a triskele, the three-armed Celtic symbol."

The plan, he added: "is practical as well as spiritual. This is not the holiday to sit on the grass and meditate, because it's going to be really cold."

Some of the worshipers, including Mr. Coughlin, will most likely wear special garb. "Some cloaky thing," he said, "to get myself mentally into the space, apart from my normal, day-to-day life."

You might guess that the spectacle of robed Druids promenading through the city commons would attract gawkers. Not so. "In New York City, people see all kinds of things going on," Mr. Coughlin said. "It's just another thing; they tend not to react."

Apparently, while the Apple Isle Druids are singing together to the Dagda, that wise and good deity, your typical cosmopolitan is blindly communing with an Android device. Which of these seems like a false god?

CEDARLIGHT MAY BE the largest of the 74 groves in A Druid Fellowship. Perhaps no coincidence, it is also the only Druid group that owns a building. A pair of second-floor rental apartments brings in some money, which is helpful: a new stone circle doesn't grow on trees. Though the clergy may reap rewards in the next life, there's no paycheck now. The furniture and dishes in the social hall have clearly been selected for a single design standard: they were free. Caryn MacLuan has been the priest at CedarLight for almost a decade; she took over from her husband, who fronted the \$50,000 down payment (about half the sale price) for the parsonage in 1996. And the building's upkeep has demanded both the sacred and the mundane. "Let's just say that being a landlord has not been my idea of being a religious leader," she said on a Friday afternoon last month.

Ms. MacLuan, 53, has had more time to devote to Druidry since she retired a few years ago as a chief warrant officer in the Coast Guard. For instance, she recently spent the weekend at an East Coast Thing, a heathen congress in the Poconos town of Milford, Pa., dedicated to the Aesir and Vanir, the heroic races of the Norse pantheon. Back home, alas, the raven pendant she bought to honor Odin seemed to be flying upside down in the flag holder over the front stair.

Perhaps the local Baltimore Ravens fans will find common cause. An earlier banner, with Celtic text, disturbed someone down the block. “They thought it was German,” she said. “And they thought we were skinheads.” Fortunately, another neighbor came to their defense: “They’re tree people.”

As a summary of a creed, Ms. MacLuan said, “tree-hugger” is close enough. A Druid Fellowship, by doctrine, is undoctrinaire, explained Ashley Bryner, the senior Druid (or warden) at CedarLight. Druids often select their personal pantheon from an Indo-European tradition, or “hearth culture.”

“The gods can run the gamut from Greek, Roman, Baltic, Slavic, Vedic, Germanic,” Ms. Bryner, 31, said. That’s a lot of gods — enough to fill a United Nations of the afterworld, or a Neil Gaiman novel. The liturgical art in the vestibule and parlor reflects that polyglot faith. One wall hosts an altar to the Celts: icons of Brighid (who later moonlighted as a saint) and a three-armed Brighid’s cross, formed out of wheat stalks. (“You can get it from a craft supply store; I went to Michaels,” Ms. Bryner said.) Another altar venerates the Norse gods. Ms. MacLuan pointed to a gallery of pictures, and said, “Over here, we have Odin, Freyja, Thor, Tyr.”

Lying on the white sofa was Thor’s hammer, called Mjolnir, which Ms. MacLuan crafted last winter, and it’s a good bet that she copied the filigree from a fantasy website. As one member put it, “The Internet is a pagan’s best friend.” At a recent Saturday-night feast, a couple of Druids were dreaming up a “Pagan Problem” Tumblr. Potential entries included “My Horn Got in the Way” and “I’m Getting to the Point in the Feast When I Need to Loosen My Corset.” Put broadly, the members of CedarLight have active imaginations. Popular pastimes include medieval re-enactments, cos-play (or costume play) and Mmorpgs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games).

The tension between fantasy and historical truth is a matter of dogma among Druids. The original Druidry, scholars agree, was an oral tradition, and the record is fragmentary, at best. This lacuna leaves competing revivals (British Druid practice re-emerged in the 1700s) and Celtic reconstruction movements. It’s fitting, then, that CedarLight has built its grove on bare ground. Ambling through the prayer garden, Ms. MacLuan said, “When we first came here, this backyard was empty.” She pointed to a holly: “That was the only tree.”

There was a time when Ms. MacLuan sowed the dirt with medicinal herbs. But the community planted a couple of pin oaks, and the squirrels scattered a few more. Now, 17 years on, the sanctuary is a shade garden.

There had been talk at the beginning of a privacy fence. But CedarLight doesn’t traffic in the occult, and it’s not a bastion against the outside world. When a water main burst in a vacant

house nearby, the earth turned into a bubbling mud pit. And however religious Ms. MacLuan may be about the value of good compost, Baltimore is no place, she said, “to have a compost pile on the ground.”

For all the Druid ritual that goes on in the garden, there’s no magic strong enough to drive out the rats.

ULTIMATELY, WHAT UNIFIES the Druids at CedarLight Grove is that they worship together — a bit of circular logic that also happens to be true. The community includes children in little cloaks and tunic tops fit for a BBC costume drama. A photo above a fountain, in the parsonage, memorializes a congregant who just joined the ancestors.

Erica DeVarney, 24, makes a kind of pilgrimage from Easton, Pa., where she works in the infant room of a day care center. “Normally it’s three hours,” she said of the drive to CedarLight, “but with the traffic today it was four and a half.”

This is not a casual commitment. “I don’t really talk to my biological family,” Ms. DeVarney said. “This is my family.”

A Druid Fellowship has spaced its holidays every six weeks, more or less, and the festivities involve planning and preparation. Mabon, which the grove treats as a kind of Druid Thanksgiving, fell in late September. And the witan spent days cleaning up the yard and preparing appreciation gifts. With the grove’s women’s group, Ms. Lyon sewed a tapestry of the World Tree, bearing a separate gold leaf for every member who attended a high rite.

At the night’s ritual, affirmations honored each member’s volunteer work. Katie delivered a fresh turkey for the feast! Hail Katie! Amy, the queen of the latrine, stocks the shared bathroom, and she is becoming an awesome seer! Hail Amy!

At holidays like Samhain, the ancestors might share our meat and drink our mead. But when they cross back through the gates to the otherworld, they leave their dirty dishes behind. (A sign on the banquet table warns that potluck leftovers will be fed to the Kraken.)

A Druid Fellowship, it seems, is more than just a name. It is a shared, living faith. Ms. Bryner, the senior Druid, said: “We take on a kind of reconstructionist bent. But we live in the modern world. Some things are not significant to us. For instance, we don’t sacrifice people anymore. We call it murder.”

The gods, in their wisdom, are merciful (until further notice).



http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qStpomHCtHI

Nature makes us Nicer

[Jaymi Heimbuch](#)

[Technology / Clean Technology](#)

October 5, 2009

Don't disregard those wall calendars showing far-off nature scenes quite yet. It just might make you a more caring, community-oriented, and generous

person. A new study by the University of Rochester found that after looking at nature scenes, people feel closer to their community, are willing to give more money to a charitable cause, and care more about social outcomes than they are after looking at man-made scenes. The reason, the researchers state, it communing with nature helps people also commune with their basic values.

The [University of Rochester reports](#) what we all have been savvy to for awhile now, that [seeing naturescapes helps reduce stress](#), and even having a window in a hospital room helps people recover more quickly. "While the salubrious effects of nature are well documented... this study shows that the benefits extend to a person's values and actions. Exposure to natural as opposed to man-made environments leads people to value community and close relationships and to be more generous with money," find [Richard] Ryan and his team of researchers at the University of Rochester.

From experiments including 370 participants, the results show that after viewing urban settings or natural settings, people exposed to natural settings rated close relationships and community higher than they had before seeing the scenes, whereas after viewing urban settings, people placed more value on wealth and fame. Additionally, those who viewed nature scenes were more likely to give higher amounts of money to a good cause.

"Lead author Netta Weinstein says that the findings highlight the importance of creating green spaces in cities and have implication for planners and architects. Incorporating parks and other representations of nature into urban environments may help build a stronger sense of community among residents, she explains. By contrast, "to the extent that our links with nature are disrupted, we may also lose some connection with each other," the authors warn."

If it is the case that being around and seeing nature makes us more people-oriented and generous, perhaps we should flood the offices of Copenhagen delegates with plants, scenes from natural settings, and earthy furniture so that they're really ready to negotiate with the future of the planet front and center.

Need to see some nature now? Check out this slideshow of [20 Wild Spaces for Getting Back to Nature](#) - It'll make you a nicer person.

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