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Samhain Essay: Prophesizing

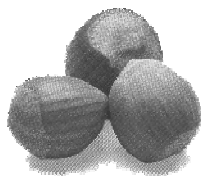
By Stacey Weinberger



Samhain, the beginning of the Season of Sleep in the Druid calendar, marks the end of the Celtic year and the beginning of the new, a time the veil between the worlds is the thinnest, when the door to the Otherworld opens and spirits walk the earth, and when communication with the dead is possible. This is the most important High Day in the Celtic calendar.

Samhain is a time associated with prophesizing and foretelling of the future. It was commonly believed that children born on Samhain were gifted with Second Sight or the ability to foresee events and objects. This was time when divination rites were practiced and there are many tales and traditions surrounding them.

In the Book of the Dean of Lismore, a mortal man, Fingean mac Luchta is visited by a ban-sidhe every Samhain who would tell him of all the marvels in all the royal strongholds of Ireland. She tells him of three chief artifacts of Ireland that were found and revealed this night, the headpiece of Briun mac Smethra, a helmet that had been hidden in the well of Sidh Cruachan from the Morrighu; the fidhell board of Crimtham nia Nar left in an adventure and was hidden in the rath of Uisneach; and the minn (diadem) of Loeguire mac Luchta Limfinn that had been hidden since the birth of Conchobar until this Samhain night. The ban-sidh also relates to Fingean other events that come to pass in the next twelve months



In modern times divination rites were still practiced in the Celtic countries at Samhain. Grain, vegetables, and fruit were used indicating the close association of Samhain with the Harvest. These were the foods that would sustain tribes through the winter. Apples and hazel nuts that played an especially important part to the early Celts: they were foods of the Otherworld, were notably used. Hazel nuts were known as a source and symbol of wisdom, and were eaten before divination. The apple symbolized life and immortality, was the talisman that admitted one to the Otherworld, and gave one the power to tell the future.

In the Border ballad Thomas the Rhymer, the 13th century poet and seer, meets the Queen of the Faeries at his favorite Eildon Tree, and after entering her mystic hill, they journey through rivers to the Land of the Faerie, where they find a garden. The queen gives him an apple from one of the trees for his wages saying, "It will gi'e thee the tongue than ne'er can Ice," and thenceforth Thomas can only speak the truth. After having been instructed by the faerie queen in prophecy or "second sight," Thomas is then able to enter Avalon as an initiate where he dwells for seven years.

There are two main apple rites that survive; one involves ordeal by water and the other ordeal by fire. The act of going through water to obtain apples could be the remnants of the Druidic rite symbolizing the passing through water to Emain Abhlach or Apple-Isle. Apple-Isle is where Manannan Mac Lir prepared the Otherworld feast for the eternal enjoyment of those who have passed on.



The Ordeal by Water survives in Scotland in such Samhain traditions as "Dookin' for Aipples." A large wooden tub is filled with water and set in the middle of the floor into which apples are placed. The master of ceremonies has a porridge stick or some other equivalent of the Druidic wand, and with this he keeps the apples in motion. Each participant get three tries, and if unsuccessful, must wait until the others have had their turn. If a participant captures an apple, it is either eaten or kept for use in another of the divination rites.

The modern form of the Ordeal by Fire is known as "The Aipple and the Can'le." A small rod of wood is taken and suspended horizontally from the ceiling by a cord. After it is fairly balanced, a lit candle is set on one end and an apple at the other. The rod is then set whirling around. Each of the company takes turns leaping up trying to bite the apple without singing his or her hair. Touching either the rod or apple with the hands is not permitted.

The divinations practiced at Samhain were chiefly used to discover who would marry, who one's partner was going to be, and who was going to die over the course of the next year. Eating the Apple at the Glass is an example of such a divination. At the hour of midnight the person goes into a room with a mirror. The room is lit with but one candle. The apple is cut into nine pieces. The person stands with his or her back to the mirror,

eats the eight pieces, and throws the ninth piece over the left shoulder. Turning towards the mirror, he or she will see the future partner.

Paring the Apple is another Samhain divination rite performed at the stroke of twelve. The person pares the apple carefully so that the skin comes off in one unbroken ribbon. As the clock strikes twelve the person swings the paring around his or her head three times with out breaking it, and tossing it over the left shoulder. The shape that the paring assumes is the initial of the querant's future spouse. If the paring breaks, matrimony will not happen in the coming year. If any of the readers wants to try either of these divination methods we would be curious to know how they work.



News of the Groves

Carleton

Fall student recruitment went relatively well, but the location of the weekly tea-meetings is in dispute. One member has reputedly "gone deep" into researching older Reformed Druidism. In other news, former Carleton Professor Paul Wellstone (considered the most liberal of existing Senators) is battling a much-watched election for a third term.

Akita Grove: News from Japan

We are doing well. Pat will work at traveling roast-chicken van until December, when the snows become too deep. I finished collecting 20 kilos of chestnuts and other fall plants from the surrounding mountains. Things are developing well in me, and the tentative date is February 4th. I will stop outdoors Shugyo at Samhain, and replace it with warmer shower meditation. We wish Americans a path to greater peace in what seems a difficult time of decision. Love, Nozomi

Amazon Grove: News from Brazil

The wrinkled post-card reads: "Obrigado! Things are well here as the rainy summer season begins. Travel in the Amazon becomes easier as igapos form in flooded forests. My research should be done by March, then I can return to the U.S. Sincerely, Ian."

Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.

Between dodging term-papers and bullets, Eric and I are doing fine. The Fall Equinox anti-war service was emotionally moving, but apparently the bills in congress passed, although we did note that the opposition was more than substantially expected, so we consider it a muted success and hope for further ripples in the social fabric in the upcoming months.

In the meantime, Mike is preparing to mail out the horde of letters in mid-November to announce the 40th Anniversary Beltane service for May 2nd-4th, 2003 at Carleton. If you have access to other Druid mailing lists, please contact Mike at mikerdna@hotmail.com so that he can spread the news by giving you a copy of the flyer.

Garran na Duirliath (Grey Oak Grove): News from Massachusetts

A new grove is forming in Marlborough, MA. Non-smokers are welcome. Contact Dad2Binky@aol.com

Bamboo Grove: News from Delaware

Well, the Bamboo Grove is a new Grove that just came into being (I think around September? That's what Mike has it down as on the RDNA Grove list, anyway.) Many thanks to Amon Sul Grove for their help and advice so that I could start my own lil' Grove in DE.

The Arch-Druid seems to be flourishing nicely... 'tis a beautiful bundle of bamboo shoots (three, actually) in a little glazed ceramic vase with three green ceramic frogs as the "pedestals." I'm rather pleased with this turn of events, since I tend to have a rather hard time growing anything successfully and usually need someone to rescue the plant. (Embarrassing stuff for a Druid!)

As for Samhain, the usual tradition is for me to wear my partly Gothic, partly Renaissance dress to classes for the day (providing it's not raining and soggy). It's a quiet way for me to challenge myself... a reminder to me that my spirituality is a part of my everyday life. In my earlier years, I would flaunt my spiritual ways, declaring to the world I was a witch, and one who could call upon the elemental powers. The tradition of wearing this dress over the years has gone from flauntingly defiant, to what it is this year... a quiet reminder that I am what I am. And most importantly it serves to remind me that my spirituality is a part of my everyday life and that no matter where I am, I can be watching and listening for the teachings the Earth-mother and Be'al may whisper to me on the winds.

I plan to give a burnt offering of dried herbs that I've held onto for a long time, not knowing what to do with them. Recently it's dawned on me that I can give of these offerings back to the Earth without harm... sprinkling herbs if I'm outdoors, and giving them up as a burnt offering in my little iron cauldron when indoors. Since I don't know much about the traditional way we honor our ancestors in the Asian tradition, I will offer up a burnt offering of dried herbs in quiet reverence, and watch as my thanks and love rise up to their realm, swirling around them as the smoke rises upwards.

I wish all a sacred and special time this Samhain.

blessings,
brightmirage

Dravidia Grove: News from Maryland

Hello all,

Dravidia Grove is going on a good scarefest this year, we are trying to do the spooky bit for the yard and see how many people we can scare the life out of. The Grove itself is kinda slow, not much time during works peak season, but it is starting to slow down now.

—Dolanimus

Eurisko Grove: News from Virginia

Things down here seem to be plugging along slowly but surely. Gwydion performed his “Jester Routine” at a Pagan Pride Day in Virginia Beach and again on 10/18 at “Harvestfaire” a medieval weekend in Newport News. Jacquie continues her six-month devotional to the Assyrian Gods ending this Samhain. All members of the grove are active in our local Pagan community and this fill most of the undesirable free time we want to get rid of so far.

Swamp Grove: News from Florida

Swamp Grove is beginning to come alive after the hot months of summer and our planting season has started. We are planning a series of Religious Philosophy trivia challenges at a local bookstore called, “Tea with the Druids.” All are welcome to try their hand at answering questions about practices and ideas concerning the topic. First place winner each month receives a gift certificate to the bookstore. The contest will be held at Naples Books a Million at 7:00 pm on the last Thursday of each month and will hopefully promote education and tolerance of other belief systems.

Mojo Proto-Grove

Mojo Protogrove will be attending a local “Bowser Boo Bash” an annual event by the local Humane Society to raise funds. Also in the works are a gathering in the forest, much divination with each member using their favorite means, and definitely a party to finish off the night.

Olympia Grove: News from Washington

Brother Daniel has been experiencing difficulties lately and has been without Internet access for most of the year. He is coping well, living healthily, and has immersed himself in the third revision of his Druidism by Mail correspondence program. Recently, he merged with a local branch of the British Druidic Order (based out of England, founded by Shallcrass and Orr), and is seeking to structure it into a stable entity. He wishes everyone a happy new year.

Cylch Cerddwyr Rhwng y Bydoedd: News from Southern Oregon

Another turning of the wheel and we enter the realm of the Crone--the favorite season of the Clerk of our Grove--Ceridwen -- for obvious reasons! We continue to grow at a slow, but steady, rate, and we are even now planning our first annual OMS-RDNA Convention--which will take place sometime next year. We are hoping to host as many of our ever-increasing number of Cybernest members as can travel here to Southern Oregon, along with some “special guests” (yet to be decided). More on that as the New Year comes upon us...

The classes are going very well. The latest Druidcraft 101 class began on September 22, and has 85 students. The Cybernest has increased to 87 members--many new ones from the previous D101 class--and they are an enthusiastic bunch! For more info about our Order, go to: <http://www.mithrilstar.org>

Ceridwen's Astrology for Pagans class also currently has 85 students, who are soon to enter into the “Intermediate” course. This is quite a “cosmopolitan” little group, with people from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Holland, Puerto Rico, Scotland, South Korea, and USA. On March 1st, a new “Beginning” cycle will start again. If you are interested, please

send a blank email to: astropagan101-subscribe@yahoo.com

And, as ever, we continue to work toward our vision of a Druid Monastery/Intentional Community--“Imladris”--which was mentioned at length in the Fall Equinox issue of the Missal-Any...

Nemeton Awenyddion: News from California

Things have been stirring up in that great cauldron and about to give rise to some very good changes for our Grove's growth and Nemeton site to go into a permanent place in which I will own the property, and still be 25 miles above Chico, Ca. only on a different hill. This is still in the works as I wait for that call on the loan. There will still be ample camping space and the gatherings will be much easier in the winter because we will then be below the snow level.

We will be holding our last campout gathering on the weekend of Nov. 1st-3rd here in Cohasset at the Nemeton's site, along with bardic fire circle after ritual, and potluck feast. I may be doing an intro to dowsing if enough Druids are interested. I'm so far expecting a crowd of about 30 or so. This event will be open to any visitors who agree with our laws of harmony, which you can read at: <http://www.geocities.com/sailletree/harmony.html>

Our online Seekers classes have been a success and we just started the second Seekers class and the first Awenydd Level class. We even had one of our new members (Laughing Fox) from the first Seekers class fly all the way out from Philadelphia for our last campout on Fall Equinox, we had a blast and ended our meeting with binding ritual song books to use when in ritual.

I also have a new best friend, a mandolin, and I've been working hard at transposing all my fiddle and harp tunes into it, I'm awaiting the cold weather of winter to absorb more musical knowledge with this new friend.

Deep Peace,

Rhiannon

Poison Oak Grove: News from California

The Renaissance Faire has returned to Marin, now put on by the now adult children of the couple who started the Renaissance Faires, which began in California. Through an odd set of circumstances, namely the Scottish guild needing water and my guild having the only running water in the area, I had the grand opportunity to learn how to waulk wool and sing waulking songs with the Scottish women. Waulking is a communal activity practiced by the womenfolk to shrink hand-woven wool to prepare it for cutting and use in making garments. The songs are sung in a call and response method as the wool is kneaded and moved around the table. The last weekend we carved turnip lanterns. Yes the Jack o' Lantern tradition goes back to Scotland! Pumpkins are a New World vegetable. Turnip lanterns were carved and hung on a strong or wire and a small candle is placed inside. This was done at Samhain to light the way for departed souls to find their way home.

This week is the Festival of the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts at the Shasta Abbey. In the Buddhist tradition, like the Celtic, food is set out for friends and family who have passed on, but on the altar rather than at the feast table or grave. I sent things I thought Emmon would like: an organic Gala apple, beautifully red and white mottled; walnuts from a friend's tree, organic hazel nuts, a small pumpkin, and a beeswax tea light.

The weekend of November 9th I will be driving up to the Mount Shasta to be able to visit his grave.

Some Optional Choices for Voluntary Simplicity

By Alex Strongbow

Looking back on earlier Missal-anies, it seems that Samhain and Yule activities are well covered. Besides if you can't think of things to do on those two holidays, then you probably couldn't find your butt with both hands. So, instead, I'd like to write for a few issues about volunteering and simplicity, a different type of activity, one that involves you with others.

Winter is one of the harshest times in the year, when the Earth-Mother, withdraws much of her nourishment from the northern temperate areas. Bird, animals and people are hard put to survive outdoors in our towns and cities. We've all seen those Thanksgiving soup kitchens and Christmas toy charities, but these are just the apexes of the daily, continual efforts to assist our fellow citizens who haven't been able to meet all their needs.

The greatest obstacle to the joys of volunteering is finding some time to do it in. Who wouldn't gladly lend their energy and expertise to serving our community, pro bono, if we could just solve those little technicalities—making a living, for example, or getting enough sleep? You've heard about the 5% rule, spending about 30 minutes a day or three hours a week on something meaningful? To assist a cause, you have to build up reserves of money, time, and inspiration.

One way, yea, one way among many, to acquiring more discretionary time is the path of voluntary simplicity. That has been defined as "living purposefully, with a minimum of needless distraction." Cut out the junk. Most people find that when they carefully coordinate their use of money and time with their deepest held values, the less important things fade away. This opens up more time and inner space for more discretionary activities, including volunteer services.

How to direct our money and time is a question that requires careful reflection and planning. You don't just throw all your possessions in a trash can and run out to save the world (although that might work). Some of the best ideas on this subject came from Steven Covey's classic *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. This is more than a book for just econometricians, it could also be called *The Seven Habits of an Aware Life*. It is chock full of good tips.



We all need "time off," a sabbatical to marshal our forces. Some tips for building space for solitude is in *Shelter for the Spirit: Creating Your Own Haven in a Hectic World* by Harper

Perennial, 1997. A quick Druidic paraphrasing of this will now follow:

- 1. Say No.** Save your time and stamina for what truly speaks to your heart. Don't chase every rabbit that you see.
- 2. Tithe Your Time.** Tithing was a time-honored tradition of giving money to charities in a planned, orderly way. Time can also be tithed, giving to something that really speaks and tugs at your heart. You say "no" without guilt to the rest, and things that are beyond achievement.
- 3. Put Things with Feelings First.** Put more importance to the condition of sentient beings than the quality of your stereo sound. This is not to deny the effect that a healthier environment has on living creatures. One hour helping the environment might be helping hundreds of critters and people in small ways.



- 4. Allow More Time.** We often waste time by cutting things close, by rushing about and forgetting and making mistakes. If you always budget in an extra 5-10% of time for a task, then you will usually have time to finish things in a careful controlled manner. No more half-ass mules, my mom would say. If all things go well, then you can read or chat or just breathe. What a gift! You might also be able to notice things that need fixing.
- 5. Prioritize with the ABC method.** Label your daily task sheet with A for "priority--must be done today," B for "important--needs to be done soon," and C for "necessary--should be done sometime." That way, even if only the A list gets done that day, at least everything that really needs to be done will be done. As time passes, the Bs and Cs will rise in importance or drop off the list.
- 6. Stay Well.** There is nothing more time-consuming that being sick. You're little use to anyone, stuck in bed. Time spent preserving health-nutrition, exercise, spiritual practice; sleep is a no-risk, high-return investment. Think twice before running to catch the bus in the rain, on what a slip and sprained ankle would do to your weekly schedule.
- 7. Let the machine get it.** There is no requirement to drop everything and run to the phone if it rings. Let your answering machine and e-mail be your secretary, and check in every few hours, and you can return your calls at your convenience.
- 8. Turn off the TV.** It takes up time. Choose consciously how much time you wish to spend with your electronic friends (TV, VCR, computer) and don't use them when you're just feeling bored.
- 9. Put off Procrastination.** Some goldbricks spend twice the effort to avoid work. Do the things on your list or drop them. Your list will shrink quickly.
- 10. Schedule in Fun.** Recreation is nourishment for the soul. It is a necessity not an option. Keep it high on the list, and you'll realize what motivates you keep plugging away through a dull job.

By the way, volunteering can be a fun way to spend time with the family, and build up their civic responsibility. For more on "voluntary simplicity," go to Northwest Earth Institute's site (www.nwei.org) or look for more on a web search.



The Apple Tree: The Fruit We All Know

By Sam Peeples

This is a more difficult tree to discuss since it is such an ever-present part of our diet. Many scientists believe it is the first fruit tree to be domesticated by humans. Apples are easy to identify by sight and flavor, and as a result they have deep connections to cultures and mythologies. We see them around us all the time in supermarkets, and apples (like corn) are one of the ubiquitous foods.

Etymology

In ogham script, apple is called Ceirt/Quert ("KWAIRT"). "Qu" (like "K" or "Kw") Not sure why the "Ceirt" is associated with the Apple tree, as Scottish translates Apple tree as "abhall" and Middle Irish "aball." Apple is "ubhal," Irish "ubhall/úll," Early Irish "uball," Old Irish "aball," Welsh "afal," Breton "avallen." According to MacFarlane's Online Gaelic Dictionary, "Ceirt" is Scottish for "right, justice, propriety," though I've also been told (by an Irishman) that it's Irish for "rag/piece of clothing." As the most popular fruit of the Teutonic area, the Apple has appropriated, as its popular name, what was once a common Germanic term for fruit of any kind, "Apfel" being once "apl," and often "apulder," connected with "maple" and "mapulder," and being still extended to many totally different fruit-bearing plants, such as thorn-apples and love-apples. The Anglo-Saxon name for the blackberry, for instance, was the bramble-apple; and that rare old traveler, Sir John Mandeville, speaking of the cedars of Lebanon, says, "they beren longe Apples, and als grete as a man's heved." Though both apples and apples of gold are spoken of in several parts of the Bible, the tree now so called is believed not to have been cultivated by the Hebrews, the citron or some other fruit being referred to.

Physical Description

The *Pyrus Malus* has over 10,000 varieties, with over 7,000 types cultivated in the U.S., but with only 20 varieties making up 90% of the commercially sold apples. The bark resembles cherry trees and belong to the enormous Rosaceae (rose) family of plants (as are pears), and approach 10-13 meters in height, although most commercial trees are cropped to keep the branches closer to the ground. The branches sometimes have thorns. They tend to be found between 30 and 60 degrees of latitude where winters are close to the freezing point, but rarely reach 15 (e.g. New England and Washington.) They like cool air of valleys and shaded hillsides. There are usually three major splayed branches with 90-degree branches. The pale white flowers are quite lovely and appear before the leaves in May, and are primarily pollinated by bees.

Apple trees may begin to bear fruit around six to eight years after sprouting, and may continue for over century (producing about 800 pounds of fruit a year), but most commercial trees are replaced after 15 years. Most modern orchards take scions, or branches of very fruitful branches, and graft them into base trees to grow better apples, while the rootstock is usually very resistant to frost, making a very robust hybrid organism. Apples are 79% water and 18% air (which is why they float and shrivel so well). They generally have a total of 10 seeds in five compartments (carpels), which make a nice star if sliced horizontally. If they don't have as many, it's probably a sign that the tree was stressed by climate, poor pollination (bees help), or growing difficulties. The better "set" the seeds are, the better the fruit will develop, usually taking 140-170 days, usually ripening in August. The sunnier the climate, the redder the apple on the sides facing the sun. Most apples are dinged or unpretty and go in as "filler" in commercial products. The world's most expensive apples are in Japan and Korea, at \$25 a piece for a perfect specimen. Some unusually well maintained orchards in Japan, place a parabolic shield under the apple to get a solid red hue to the entire apple.

Physical Use

- Apples are for eating, silly.
- Apple wood is sometimes used as a veneer for furniture and music instruments.
- Crab-apple tree, a wild variant, has a proverbial hard wood, excellent for cudgels.
- Apple wood is fine for carving and smells beautiful when burned. As the old rhyme says, "Pear logs and Apple logs, They will scent your room."
- The unripe fruits of the wild Apple are used in the manufacture of verjuice, now chiefly made in France, which, when fermented and sweetened, makes a pleasant drink; but in the sixteenth century the fruit was in more esteem than it now is. Christmas was then the season they being served in hot ale "When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl."

Mythological Appearance

The first and most famous appearance of Apple is definitely in Genesis where many people assume that the apple was the forbidden fruit on the Tree of Good and Evil. It simply doesn't state what type of fruit it was, except that it was good to eat. Most likely it was a late medieval tradition based on the pictorial choice of the apple by various European artists. There were some varieties of apple tree in the Middle East, but a citron or fig would have been more likely, if it wasn't just a story. Apple tree, Heb., thappuakh (cf. Arab, tiffah; Egypt. dapih, "apple") and the description of the tree and its fruit indicate the common apple tree, *Malus communis*, which is beautiful, affording shade for a tent or a house (Cant., ii, 3; viii, 5), and bears a sweet fruit, the aroma (Cant., vii, 8) of which is used in the East to revive a fainting person (cf. Cant., ii, 5). Apple groves flourished at an early date (Ramses II) in Egypt (Loret, "Flore pharaonique," p. 83); place-names like Tappuah (Jos., xii, 17) or Beth-tappuah (A. V., Jos., xv, 53) indicate that they were a distinct feature of certain districts of Palestine. But this might

be renaming of the fruit after a place. We see the apple in many modern Jewish traditions. During Rosh Hashanah, apple slices dipped in honey are eaten in the hope of a sweet new year. Haroset is a traditional Passover dish. It is a mixture of apple, nuts, wine, and spices, representing the brick mortar with which the Jews were forced to build while they were enslaved in Egypt.

Apples appear frequently in Celtic Lore. The Isles of the Otherworld are sometimes called Emain Abhlach, Emain of the Apple Trees. Cormac was once offered a branch (possibly for grafting?) from Manannan Mac Lir. It bore golden apples. When shaken it gives off a sweet sound that soothes sadness, cures illness and brings peace. It is the giving of a similar branch that soon inspired the voyages of Bran in the Immram Curaig Bran MacFerbal. In both cases, the hero soon made a journey to the Otherworld. Because they are seen as an Otherworld gift, it is not really surprising that they appear so frequently in Samhain customs (bobbing for apples on strings or in tubs), especially those concerned with divining future events. It is true, of course, that round about October and November they are a good wholesome food that is both in season and readily available.



Avalon, where the wounded Arthur was taken from the battlefield, is also related. Geoffrey calls it "Avallo" in the *HISTORIA* and "insula pomorum" (island of the apples) in the *VITA MERLINI*. It is often seen as having a connection with apples because of the similarity of its name to various Celtic words indicating that fruit: Old Irish ABALL, Middle Welsh Afall, Middle Breton Avallenn, Celtic Avallo. It has also been connected with Avalloc, evidently originally a god who, according to William of Malmesbury, lived there with his daughters. The present case form of the name may have been influenced by the Burgundian place name Avallon. One school of thought suggests that it comes from Irish Oileán (island). It was perhaps originally a Celtic paradise. It was said to produce crops without cultivation, to be ruled by Guingamuer, Morgan's lover, or by a king named Bangon. In *PERLESVAUS*, Guinevere and Loholt died before Arthur and were buried there. Avalon was then identified with Glastonbury, probably because Arthur's grave was supposedly found at Glastonbury in the reign of Henry II and, as tradition had had him borne away to Avalon, the two were considered the same. However, because of the first syllable in Glastonbury's name, some may have thought it identical with Caer Wydyr, the Fort of Glass, another name for Annwfn.

The tale of the Sons of Tuirenn combine both Irish and Graeco-Roman elements. The Sons of Tuirenn killed Lugh's father, Cian. Lugh demanded that they do eight "impossible" tasks as blood-price for his father's life. The first was to bring back three apples from the Garden of the Hesperides in the east of the world. They would know these apples from the following characteristics: they were the size of a one-month-old child, the color of burnished gold, and they tasted of honey; eating them healed all wounds and diseases and the apples would not be diminished by being eaten; and if thrown, they would rebound to the thrower's hands. The Sons of Tuirenn managed to accomplish all eight tasks, but were mortally wounded while

doing the last one. Lugh refused to allow them to use the healing powers of another object they captured in the second task, a magical pig skin, so they died shortly thereafter.

Another famous apple that caused trouble was given by Eris. She was of such a deplorable nature, that the gods had kept Eris apart, and she was not in the list of guests who were invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of Achilles. Nevertheless, Eris, being difficult to get rid of, came to the party and threw a golden apple through the door with the inscription: Kallisti ("For the fairest") And Hera, Athena and Aphrodite started disputing on account of the apple, and were therefore sent by Zeus to Mount Ida near Troy in order to be judged by the shepherd Paris, who chose Aphrodite as the most beautiful, accepting Helen's hand for a bribe. This is one cause of the Trojan War, for Paris, having come to fetch his bribe at Sparta, where Helen was queen, left the city as her lover and sailed with her to Troy. But her husband Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, against all odds--for war had never before broken-up for the sake of a woman--sent a powerful army against Troy, and produced a conflagration that still today causes such an awe and amazement as if the flames of Troy were still burning. The modern followers of Eris, the Discordians, use the Kallisti apple as one of their symbols has another rendition.

In another Greek legend, Atalanta was a powerful warrior who would only marry the man who could outrun her. Desperate to win, Hippomenes prayed to Aphrodite for aid, and she gave him golden apples from her garden, which he was to throw into Atalanta's path. The apples did distract Atalanta and he won the race, but he forgot to give due honor to Aphrodite afterwards and as punishment, both he and Atalanta were changed into lions.

The Hesperides were three virgin sisters who, along with a dragon, guarded the tree of golden apples Gaea had given to Hera as a wedding gift in their garden. These were reputed to bring beauty and health. It was during the eleventh of the twelve labors of Heracles that he brings back the golden apples to the world.

Pomona was the Roman Goddess of fruit trees, especially of apple trees, and was also known as the "Apple Mother" who gave the "apples of eternal life." Roman banquets ended with apples and an invocation of Pomona's blessing. Pomona had a special priest appointed to her service. Her sacred grove was called the "Pomonal" and was located on the road from Rome to Ostia.

In the legend of Thomas the Rhymer (13th century), Thomas Learmont, laird of the castle of Ercildoune, is accosted by a hag who takes him on a journey. He is shown three paths, one of leads to the land of the Fay. While ravenously hungry, he resolutely passes by all the luscious fruits of all kinds, but he is warned not to eat of any of them, for he would then be trapped there forever. He is also told that his hunger would soon be relieved with an apple. When they reach a certain spot, the hag climbs down off the horse and offers Thomas an apple from a small yet perfect tree. She tells him that after eating it he will be graced with the gift of Truth. At that time the hag turns into a beautiful woman and together they go to a castle where they feast and make merry for three days. At the end of that time, the woman tells him that he must return to his own world where seven years have passed. When he returns home, he finds that he is given the gifts of prophesy, poetry, and an enchanted harp. He becomes a wise ruler of his territories and is, in time, called back to Fairyland where he remained.

Iduna, wife of the Norse God of poetry, Bragi, kept a box of apples. If any of the Gods felt the approach of old age, they only had to taste of one of these apples to remain young. She was abducted by a giant (aided by Loki) and, in time, the other Gods realized that they were aging rapidly. Loki was sent to

rescue her so that she might restore youth to the Gods. He later married her, and whenever he was punished, she would sometimes use these apples as leverage to free him.



Another renowned myth to the Swiss is the story of William Tell refusing to bow to a Hapsburg lord's hat placed on a stick in the town square. As punishment he is forced to shoot an apple off his son's head with a crossbow. After doing so, he then manages to escape from the governor's clutches on a stormy river, effectively drowning the rascal. The legend is a distortion of actual events that led in 1291 to the formation of the Everlasting League among the forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden. The original story is believed to derive from a 12th century Scandinavian tale of shooting a small object off a loved-one's head.

http://switzerland.isyours.com/e/guide/zentral_schweiz/williamtell.html

The next feat of the legendary apple would be Sir Isaac Newton's discovery or realization of Gravity. During a plague in the city, he retired to a country estate. As the tale goes, Sir Isaac Newton was sitting under an apple tree when an apple fell on his head. This, supposedly, was what led him to discover the laws of gravity. Popular legend to the contrary, Sir Isaac was not beamed on the noggin by an apple, although it's said that watching apples fall from a tree in his parents' yard was an inspiration. His treatise on gravitation, presented in *Principia Mathematica* (1687) observed the fall of an apple in an orchard at Woolsthorpe and calculates that at a distance of one foot the attraction between two objects is 100 times stronger than at 10 feet.



The most famous recent example is, of course, Johnny Appleseed, a.k.a. John Chapman (1774-1845), an eccentric,

itinerant pioneer nurseryman and colporteur. He won the respect of many settlers and Native Americans alike as he made his way from his native Massachusetts to the Pennsylvania/ Ohio/Indiana frontier, planting apple nurseries, spreading "news right fresh from heaven," meditating and healing. He exchanged his apple seeds and seedlings for food, cast-off clothing and articles and frontier currency enough to take care of his simple needs. Profits went for copies of Swedenborg's works, which he separated into parts for wider and cheaper distribution. There are several songs about him.

Medicinal and Magical Uses

- The sugar of a sweet apple, like most of the fruit sugars, is amazing. It is practically a predigested food, and is soon ready to pass into the blood to provide energy and warmth for the body. A nice ripe raw apple is one of nature's most easiest vegetable substances for the stomach to deal with, the whole process of its digestion being completed in eighty-five minutes. The juice of apples, without sugar, will often reduce acidity of the stomach; it becomes changed into alkaline carbonates, and thus corrects sour fermentation.
- "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." From an old English advice "Ate an apfel avore gwain to bed, makes the doctor beg his bread."
- "It is better to give than receive." Derived from a fourteenth-century saying "Betere is appel y-yeue than y-ete" (Better is the apple you give than you get.)
- Paradise is a word derived from the Persian *paeridaeza*, or walled garden, such as the Persian gardens, normally containing apple orchards. Throughout history, depictions of the Garden of Paradise include apple trees.
- Bartholomeus Anglicus, whose *Encyclopedia* was one of the earliest printed books containing botanical information (being printed at Cologne about 1470), gives a chapter on the Apple. He says:

"Malus the Appyll tree is a tree yt bereth apples and is a grete tree in itself. It is more short than other trees of the wood wyth knottes and rinelyd Rynde. And makyth shadowe wythe thicke bowes and branches: and fayr with dyurs blossomes, and floures of swetnesse and lykyng: with goode fruyte and noble. And is gracious in syght and in taste and vertuou in medecyne. some beryth sourysh fruyte and harde, and some ryght soure and some ryght swete, with a good savoure and mery."

- The custom of serving fresh fruit, particularly apples, at the end of a meal arose because of digestive qualities attributed to them by such early medical notables as Hippocrates and Galen, the latter a second-century Roman physician.
- The medieval physician's bible, the Salerno medical school's *Prescription for Health*, taught therapeutic applications of cooking apples for disturbances of the bowels, lungs and nervous system, among other ailments.
- The modern tradition of tossing rice at a happy couple succeeds an ancient practice of throwing apples at weddings. I guess, British native apple trees have smaller fruit than modern commercial fruit, or perhaps the Celts were just ornery cusses.
- The game of apple-bobbing began as a Celtic New Year's tradition for trying to determine one's future spouse.
- An Irish and Scottish custom prescribed throwing an apple peel over one's shoulder on the ground, where it would form the initial of your lover's name.

- Eat an apple whole, saving just the pips. An odd number foretells a marriage; an even number means that none is imminent.
- It is said that you may cut an apple into three pieces, then rub the cut side on warts, saying: "Out warts, into apple."
- The once-popular custom of wassailing the orchard-trees on Christmas Eve, or the Eve of the Epiphany, is not quite extinct even yet in a few remote places in Devonshire. More than three centuries ago Herrick mentioned it among his "Ceremonies of Christmas Eve:"

"Wassaile the trees, that they may beare

You many a Plum and many a Peare:

For more or lesse fruits they will bring,

As you do give them Wassailing."

- The ceremony consisted in the farmer, with his family and laborers, going out into the orchard after supper, bearing with them a jug of cider and hot cakes. The latter were placed in the boughs of the oldest or best bearing trees in the orchard, while the cider was flung over the trees after the farmer had drunk their health in some such fashion as the following:

"Here's to thee, old apple-tree!

Whence thou may'st bud,

And whence thou may'st blow,

Hats full! Caps full!

Bushel-bushel-bags full!

And my pockets full too! Huzza!"

- The toast was repeated thrice, the men and boys often firing off guns and pistols, and the women and children shouting loudly. (I do not recommend this part.) Roasted apples were usually placed in the pitcher of cider, and were thrown at the trees with the liquid. Trees that were bad bearers were not honored with wassailing but it was thought that the more productive ones would cease to bear if the rite were omitted. It is said to have been a relic of the heathen sacrifices to Pomona. The custom also prevailed in Somersetshire and Dorsetshire.
- In Danish, German, and English folklore, and in voodoo, apples are used as love charms.
- Roast apples, or crabs, formed an indispensable part of the old-fashioned wassailbowl, or "good brown bowl," of our ancestors.

"And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl

In very likeness of a roasted Crab."

- As related by Puck in *Midsummer's Night's Dream*. The mixture of hot spiced ale, wine or cider, with apples and bits of toast floating in it was often called Lamb's wool, some say from its softness, but the word is really derived from the Irish *la mas nbhal*, "the feast of the apple-gathering" (All Hallow's Eve), which being pronounced somewhat like "Lammas-ool," was corrupted into "lamb's wool." It was usual for each person who partook of the spicy beverage to take out an apple and eat it, wishing good luck to the company.

Apple Songs

- "Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider" by U.S. minstrel Eddie Leonard (1903).
- "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" by Egbert Van Alstyne, lyrics by Henry Williams (1905), author of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."
- "I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time" by Albert von Tilzer, lyrics by Neville Flesson (1920).
- "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" by Louiguy, lyrics by Jacques Larme (1950).
- "The Golden Brown and the Green Apple" by Duke Ellington (1965).
- "Little Green Apples" by Bobby Russell (1968).
- "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" words and music by Lew Brown, Charles Tobias and Sam H. Stept (1942).

Apple Links

Botanical lore and details on making cider by presses and just loads of recipes:

<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/a/apple044.html>

Apple magical associations:

<http://www.thymewise.net/herbal/apple.php>

Apples in western lore:

<http://patriot.net/~nachtanz/SSB/ssbapple.html>

Apple lore:

<http://www.michiganapples.com/pg46thru48.pdf>

Crab apple variant:

<http://www.growingnative.org.uk/crabapple.htm>

Apple quotes in literature:

<http://www.appleappetite.com/Appleisms.htm>

Good parallel to this page:

<http://www.iol.ie/~sinann/grove/trees3.html>

More apple quotes and apple history chronology:

<http://home.istar.ca/~twinbrnd/appinfo.html#Quotes>

Wisdom from apples:

<http://www.angelfire.com/mn/cillabhaill/Wisdom.html>

Apple lore:

http://www.bennersfarm.com/HA%20folder/Festival%20lore/ha_applelore.htm

Apple terminology:

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Art_Lewis/apple.htm

Apple songs for kids:

http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool_themes/apples/apple_songs.htm

More kids' stuff:

<http://www.alphabet-soup.net/dir2/applesong.html>



Unearthing Dalon: General Elements of a Dalon ap Landu Myth Cycle

By Thomas Lee Harris, Jr.,
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(Note: While this article purposes to set forth general elements of a Dalon ap Landu myth cycle, before this article, such a myth cycle did not exist. Except, of course, for a newly created battle between Dalon ap Landu and Hu-Gadarn, which was written--both in poetry and prose form--because of said lack of a myth for Dalon. Dalon's myth cycle, thus, is the epitome of Zen Druid myth. It is the myth that was, and is not, there.)

If one were to quickly glance over a Dalon Cycle—at least this one--it would reveal him to be almost a Neo-Celtic Messiah, were such a thing to exist, or more properly a Druid Everyman. Possibly even the pretense for demi-godhood exists. He is very much an archetypal Druid as well as a Lord of the Groves. The much used title “Lord of the Groves” applies to several greater and lesser known Celtic deities (or at least does not apply to them for purposes of this article, supposing the various forms of Green Man and sylvan deities would be called Lord of the Grove in an extended sense) and can thus be seen as a description of intimate knowledge of Nature rather than mastery over it. First appearing as a name singularly encapsulating the Third Order of the RDNA (The Council of Dalon ap Landu) as well as the ideals Neo-Druids strive to attain, the fact that we were calling on him in our rites without having any form of myth for him, or other means of finding him in Celtic legend was all it took for us to decide, well, Dalon needed some kind of history to him.

Dalon first appears--in his myth--as a prophetic spirit. After all, he probably should have some form of pre-incarnational existence. Let's say that he's most likely an incarnation of Duir/Oak and a spiritual descendant of Nuada.

Despite our knowing the parentage of Dalon, his cycle has no birth, no nativity, though we'll say for the sake of convenience that this may have been lost in the course of time. As such neither given a concrete place of time, he is a person of pure mythology. He is a human manifestation of Duir/Oak, so he doesn't have a human heart, but in its place is an acorn, and all the potentiality contained therein.

His parents are a goddess (either Danu, Brigit, or Gaia depending on the source being used), and Landu, a chieftain, his human father (there may once have been a Landu Cycle, but

none of it exists as of the writing of this article. Let's get those creative juices flowing then...) Landu feared that Dalon would discover his maternal origins, so as chieftain over his clan's holdings, he expelled every Druid from his clan's lands and had every stone circle cast down to discourage the impractical leanings of his son's mind. With the circle gone and no human teacher available Dalon is forced to go directly into groves to learn. His education and initiation comes not from the human world, but from Nature Herself during the vigils he holds at Her feet. Often this Nature Goddess is his Mother.

Greater and lesser loves and lusts of Dalon, especially the relationship he has with the Pine-Son. Unlike the Zeus/Ganymede story, there is no abduction. Unlike Apollo/Hyacintus/Zephyr, there is no jealousy, even in the face of extraneous, often bisexual, paramours they both entertain corporately and separately. (Yes, yes, it smacks of polyamory, but let's remember this is a modern myth cycle.) There is a progression from the awe of newfound love to mystical union to continual revelation and deep sharing. It is almost as if they meet as youths, handfast, and feasibly could grow old together and be buried side by side, were they mere mortals. Their bisexuality, as a concept, is conveniently a “modern anachronism read into the cycle but actually not applicable from their standpoint, as from the mythic standpoint, gender was a non-issue” in case anyone asks.

The enlightenment of Dalon ap Landu is very Buddhaesque. An authority I'll make up for documenting the enlightenment is No'one the Short, a true sage if ever there was one, said, “If Dalon see the Be'al, it is only during his Enlightenment,” and “Since the Enlightenment of Dalon, the World Tree from his navel grows.” One must assume that since Buddha's enlightenment happens under a Bodhi tree, Dalon's must happen beneath an Oak, although No'one's navel comment has caused some authorities to debate whether the World Tree in the Dalon cycle is actually an orange. Others insist that this is only navel gazing. The debate is cut short by a passage thought to originate with Dalon himself: “For now is every tree become the World Tree. The oak is the ash, the ash is the oak, bramble, chieftain, warrior...these are now made the same in my eyes, not as unknowing of the Mystery and every wall is laid flat in my eyes...every boundary is breached.”

Next comes Dalon's coming to grips with his Shadow Aspect. There is some debate as to whether these tales come before or after the enlightenment episodes, but most sources say afterwards as a warning against self-righteousness. Trickster stories are usually incorporated under this heading.

The disowning of Dalon by Landu. This may originally have been a threefold disowning, for there are three different accounts of why Dalon was disowned. Source A holds that it was due to the religious aspect, Source B holds that Landu disapproved of the Dalon/Pine-Son romance, and Source C holds that he was disowned due to an incident in the shadow tales.



Forced out of Landu's lands, the next phase of Dalon's life begins with his becoming a hermit and interacting purely with the Old Ones. This, basically, is Dalon goes up the hill to commune with the Old Ones, returns to deliver his teachings in the Mishnah of Dalon. The whole thing is very Moses on the Mountain and Jesus-Sermon-on-the-Mount-ish. At some point in these discourses, Dalon raised his hands in the midst of a field (conveniently because he just came down from a mountain, possibly one of the Ozarks, much to the chagrin of Old World Druids) and the birds that were in the field arose around him and his Holy Band. The birds flew off to the Four Quarters. Dalon turned to his followers and said, "Even as these birds have flown, so do I send you into the Worlds. I am the door, but if is given to you to be the threshold. You are the reason for the door, you are my definition. Lest I send you out as a sower sows seeds, my speaking unto you will have been in vain." The fulfillment, the very apex, of the Mishnah of Dalon is the sending out of the Holy Band. They were his "apostles" if you can call them that. They were poor and illiterate, a rag-tag gathering of souls that had little in common other than the belief that they could change the world, and that someone had shown them how to do it.

Upon the sending out of the Holy Band, Dalon begins his own pilgrimage. The source of many local legends concerning Dalon in various capacities and guises, morality stories and miracle stories become part and parcel of this cycle, turning Dalon into a Messiah-like figure (also sort of like a Hercules figure in that lots of communities had a Hercules story in the areas that had Greek influence). He has to travel to establish covert recognition of his Divine Nature while, at the same time, discouraging any worship of himself as being especially Divine.

The transfiguration of Dalon is the culmination of his Great Pilgrimage, then Dalon returns to his ancestral home and to his father, Landu. No one, on the subject of the transfiguration, said: "This can be seen as a lesser event than his enlightenment, for by defining himself as the model Druid, he attempts to limit what a Druid can be, and thus takes a step away from being an image of the all-encompassing Be'al" and "We cannot lose sight that although he is an archetypal Druid manifesting human nature and awe at the Mysteries of Nature, he is--when transfigured--the Lord of the Groves, Spirit of Oak, as much as his rival, Hu-Gadarn..."

Dalon finds Landu in Battle with Hu-Gadarn. Metaphysically, the battle represents our highest potentials grappling with primordial powers, or traditions of our tribe, and concepts beyond our ability to control. The battle between Landu and Hu-Gadarn is assumed to result the jealousy over the love of Dalon's divine mother (again, Her identity is variously given according to what source is used), and Hu-Gadarn kills Landu. Dalon rushes to Landu's side, picks up Landu's spear, and fights Hu-Gadarn. Dalon and Landu represent two visions of the Lord of the Groves. Hu-Gadarn represents the ancient and primal Lord of the Groves as the wildwood. Dalon represents the Lord of the Groves as that of mankind in relationship with the wildwood and Hierophant of the Druid Groves. Hu-Gadarn mortally wounds Dalon as a reminder of human mortality and weakness in the face of Nature itself, and then Hu-Gadarn disappears, either into the wildwood or the fog, depending once again upon the source being used.

Dalon gives the Pine-Son the acorn as an androgynous symbol and as a token of love (remember, the acorn is Dalon's heart) and tries to hold onto life as winter's chill sets in. When at last he can hold on no more, the Pine-Son finally gives him the pinecone while the Pine-Son discourses concerning the eternity of the soul, reincarnation, et cetera. Dalon finally dies in the arms of the Pine-Son. Following Dalon's death there are later metaphysical attributions, in liturgy, written word, and oral

tradition as the Lord of the Groves, Initiator, and Dying/Reborn God. He appears as a Nature Spirit in several diverse accounts, and is then reborn. When the rebirth occurs, the Druids are sent out in search of the reborn Lord of the Groves.



A Sociological Look at the Reformed Druids of North America at Carleton College

Or 'The Epistle of Irony'

Section II

Origins of the Reformed Druids

The Reformed Druids of North America began, with no connection to either the Paleo or the modern European Druids, at Carleton College in April of 1963. At that time the college had a requirement for graduation stating that

"Attendance is required at the College Service of Worship or of the Sunday Evening Program or at any regularly organized service of public worship. Each term, every student must attend seven [of ten] of the services or religious meetings."¹

A number of students felt that it was unfair to require people to attend services and decided to test the policy. The protesters were led by the original 'Triumvirate', consisting of David Fisher, Howard Cherniack and Norman Nelson. They noted the escape clause of "or at any regularly organized service of public worship" and realized that they could create and organize such a service themselves and offer it up to the relevant deans as a fulfillment of the requirement. The college would have two choices, as they saw it: either to refuse to recognize them and be accused of religious discrimination, or to let them graduate at which point the movement would be declared a hoax and the requirement further ridiculed.²

Instead, in the summer of 1964, John Nason, the president of the college, sent out a memo revoking the requirement. It should be noted that Nason had already decided that the college's policy of *In Loco Parentis* was outdated and may have been planning to revoke the requirement all along. The role of the Druids in its elimination is debatable, but they cheerfully took the credit for its disappearance.

Two things about this origin are crucial to the understanding of Reformed Druidism. The first is that the founders never intended the movement to last. The second is that the Reformed Druids had no connection what so ever to any

1 Carleton College Catalogue, March 1964, pp. 136. -ARDA-

2 It should be remembered that these students--the original 'triumvirate' consisting of David Fisher, Howard Cherniack and Norman Nelson--were in no way irreligious. David is currently an Episcopalian priest. They merely felt that the requirement was unfair on principle and should be tested. They also hedged their bets and continued attending the 'legitimate' services throughout their protest.

other Druid group at the time of their founding.³ "Indeed," writes Scharding, "this leads up to the greatest hindrance to the entire study of Reformed Druidism; the name 'Druid.' Many scholars will see the word 'Druidism' on a sheet of paper and suddenly a myriad of assumptions will strangle their minds."⁴

The Reformed Druid movement embodies none of the philosophy, worldview, cultural resonance or even religion of the Celts, Paleo, or Meso Druids. The name was picked because it was sufficiently venerable to be taken seriously and sufficiently misunderstood that the young RDNA could make up whatever they chose and not be called on inaccuracies.⁵ As the story goes, Howard Cherinack's parents did not like indicating that they were Jewish on government forms, and had taken to writing 'Druid' instead. The Triumvirate picked up the idea and ran with it, inventing beliefs as they went. The subsequent history of the movement is complex and fascinating but I do not intend to address it here. Scharding has covered it more thoroughly than I am ever likely to and traces its internal dividing and developments over a thirty-year span. I will attempt to avoid much of that discussion except where it is relevant to our purpose here.

Section III

Beliefs of the Reformed Druids

Two things were of primary importance for the Reformed Druids in the beginning, and have remained fundamental to the movement ever since. The respect for nature, and the respect for each individual's rights. The founders wanted to create a system that would contain a meaningful core while eschewing all dogma and orthodoxy. In the words of one Druid, "Reformed Druidism is a statement that religion has a tendency to become organized religion and [sic] which then becomes organization devoid of religion."⁶ The founders were very conscious of this 'fossilization theory' and wished to provide no framework for organization that could be exploited later. As such, when the two tenets were devised and finalized in 1963, they were kept as simple and as inclusive as possible.

The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and never-ending search, may be found through the Earth-Mother; which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth-Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it people do live, yea, even as they do struggle through life they are come face to face with it.⁷

3 This will be discussed more in section IV.

4 ARDA pp. 339. This seems to be a thing that each researcher is at pains to learn anew

5 "Mec"—Michael Scharding--wasted eight months of research before figuring this out. I knew he'd done so and I still fell for it. My desk is littered with fascinatingly irrelevant books on Druidism that have nothing to do with the RDNA.

6 Internal correspondence ARDA pp. 338

7 An interesting change in the modern phrasing of the first tenet is the omission of the idea that the spiritual search is universal. The reason for this is two fold. One motivation is a desire not to impose even that truth on others. Another is that it has become apparent that one can be a great Druid without holding that the

These are the only two tenets of the Reformed Druids of North America--and the only two statements with which all Druids are ever likely to agree. Everything else is up to the individual. In their original form the tenets are rather cumbersome. They are often paraphrased as 'Nature is good' and 'Nature is good.' A more serious way of putting it, currently practiced amongst the Druids at Carleton is to say that first: The spiritual search is an important, individual, and life long endeavor, and secondly, that one way of searching lies through the study, understanding, and awareness of nature. Each of these phrasings indicates something rather different if they are taken literally, yet it is at one truth that they point. The only commandment I have ever seen attached to Reformed Druidism is Think for thyself! The tenets, however you conceive of them, establish the framework in which to do this.



Druidism teaches that you have the right to believe what you know to be true, no matter what anyone else thinks of it. At the same time it holds that you cannot simply pick what you would like to be the case, nor design a cosmology irrespective of what the world teaches. To be a Druid is to deliberately and consciously seek out the truth of the world and decide for yourself what it is you will believe. Margot Adler sheds some useful light on the matter when she writes "The original founders seemed to hold the fundamental idea that one should scrutinize religion from 'a state of rebellion,' neither embracing traditional faiths nor rejecting them."⁸

Druids look everywhere for inspiration. World philosophies, religions, science fiction, children's books, strange dreams, the flight of swallows; all are considered equally valid insights to potential truths that must be at least examined, if never espoused. As Scharding writes, "It was important to Druidism that you believed your own views instead of slavishly following those of others, provided that you had carefully examined them and judged them sound."⁹ This intellectual honesty is a necessary--if not sufficient--feature of the Druidic search. Without it the movement would descend into utter relativism.¹⁰

spiritual search holds any immediate, personal, relevancy. David Coil, one of the greatest Druid apologists at Carleton today and the functional right hand of the Archdruid for the last year, holds the above view. He believes that upon death he will go back to being 'nineteen cents of chemicals,' end of story. He would rather live life that ponder its spiritual significance, and expresses one of the purest Druidic spirits on campus.

8 Drawing Down the Moon. pp. 301

9 ARDA. pp. 341

10 One could argue that the Druids already embody such a relativism in that the closest thing we have to a statement of belief is really simply an insistence that you search truth out your self. If so, it is only the relativism of individual minds. Yet I do not believe that even this is the case. The intellectual honesty that Druidism fosters encourages clear sight and careful thinking, and it seems that even with a great many people

Another significant feature of Druidic 'belief' is that it is compatible with almost any other religious system. It serves to accentuate rather than replace a person's faith. Michael Scharding is a devout (maybe) Catholic as well as being a Druid. The group today contains at least one Atheist Druid, Jewish Druid, Quaker Druid, Seventh Day Adventist Druid, and innumerable Agnostic and Confused Druids. Indeed, the people who have taken Reformed Druidism to be their only religion have always been in the minority. The movement is hardly a thing that one can be converted to. The most common reaction to the personal acceptance of being a Druid is one of coming home. My own was, "Oh-- now at last I have a name for what I've always done." The inclusiveness with which Druidism approaches all other religions is one of its strongest and most redeeming features.



Where Are My Druid Ancestors?

By Mike Scharding, Digitalis Grove

I get one of these delightful letters about every week and spend copious amounts of work-time on them. Perhaps this sample response may assist you in your own correspondence. I sometimes wish to tell them that we do keep records, "but only back to 538 A.D., and strangely they are all in a mysterious language on golden plates." But honestly, it is a pressing dilemma for a movement that espouses tradition but rejects many of those traditions of the last 1300 years of recorded history. I hope that it opens your eyes to the desperate desire of many young pagans to fill a "missing link" between themselves and their more ancient ancestors. Is this a curable condition, and do you have any other responses to this perennial question?

Dear Mike,

My question is about a matter of how does one research their ancestor's involvement with druidism? I am very interested in

searching in this manner, agreements and commonalities arise. It may be that when people look hard and carefully at the nature of reality they all find, on some fundamental level, the same things. It seems to me that even without an imposed order to the universe, relativism confounds itself against a deeper order that is already present. It is part of the answer to the problem of saying "This is the truth that I have found, which I will force on no one else--but it applies to everybody." A rigorous examination of this confusion will have to await the foredoomed attempt of working out a formal Druidic philosophy and metaphysic.

finding out a few things about my family and believe somehow our lives have been impacted by our ancestor's involvement. This may sound outlandish but I would like to know to figure or trace information. What are the oldest records, and whom does one speak with for this sort of information? If you are not sure, please forward this to somebody who might be of some help.

Thank you very much! Yours truly,

Desperately Seeking Seanachi

Dear Seanachi,

Hi, how ya doing?

I wish I could be of greater help on this subject. My parents have done extensive genealogy back to the 17th century, and we're pretty sure we've got more ancestors before those ones. But in my own Reformed Druidic way, I'll try to offer my best advice on this frequent question. There may be a solution imbedded somewhere in this long reply.

Most genealogical records of the American/British/French citizens only go about to the 17th century (ask the Mormons for assistance on research); unless you are linked to a royal family, then you go back into the late medieval age (barring "secret" records, if they exist or are not doctored). This sadly leaves all of us out of any connection with "actual ancient druids" who more or less vanished by the 7th to 9th century, probably. It is probably that every clan had its Druid (or at least a bard or two).

But given the closeness to royalty and religious power throughout the ancient and modern world (every single U.S. President is a descendent of William the Conqueror, and the one with the most direct patriarchal connection (and always the tallest except for G.W. Bush, but he didn't really win) has always won the presidency. Their family trees are carefully done by a foundation, so finding a president or noble in your family tree would be a good route.



Now although Patriarchy was seemingly well established by the first few centuries of the Christian Era, we cannot be entirely sure that the job of Druid was passed on from parent to child, and there is evidence that in some Celtic area, that inheritance may have passed through the mother and adoption of apprentices or nephews and nieces was frequently an established part of village life and career training. But, let's assume for now that Druids didn't sensibly select the smartest and most promising children of the countryside, and rather only passed on their knowledge and powers to their biological offspring, regardless of their natural talent (one of the reasons why hereditary Monarchy is not a great idea). Well, since celibacy wasn't truly in effect until the 16th century for many clergy and

monks and popes; and many Druids reportedly re-defined their job-description to "Christian" with changing fashions of power; a link to an ancient abbot, bishop or pope would also be a good bet.

Now, you might have better luck finding a family connection to a meso-pagan Druidic revival organization since 1697 (one of the fraternalistic clubs.). They presumably kept membership records. If there were any "Druidic Survivals," they probably would have joined one of these clubs over the last three centuries. Contact OBOD or (<http://druidry.org/>) or UAOD or AOD (<http://www.igld.org/orgnat.htm>) to pursue this route, then provide a list of your family members and time periods and they may or may not be able to confirm or disconfirm their membership.

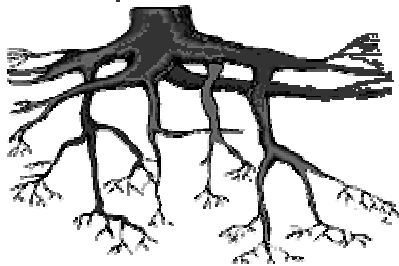
Another route. Since it is generally agreed that when explicit Druidry was suppressed, the bards probably continued some of the stories, truth or lore of the Celtic religious culture. So if you could find any minstrels or entertainers (like O'Carolan and such) then you might have a connection. Such as a "harper" or MacCruithin, or one of the hereditary piper families of a clann. Many chieftainships and positions were hereditary, and the clann system continued to the 16th century in Ireland and 19th century in Scotland, well into the historical period.

If you wave enough money or foolishness in public, someone will supply all your needs (see credit card salesmen and Madame Cleo). Anyone who offers you a Celtic pedigree chart is probably just trying to scam some money; and there are lots of them already working the Scottish/Irish-descendent market; adding you would not take much more trouble. Demand to see the original documents and blow the dust off them yourself.

Here are the last few methods, and perhaps least satisfying for pedigree mongers, is Idea, Nature, Divine Inspiration, Simple Mathematics, and of course the Apple and Boat test.

Idea

If the thoughts and beliefs of the Druids can leap from their bodies to non-blood relationship people through the medium of words and music and custom; then by studying ancient and modern Celtic culture you can regain the seeds of those past souls and hopefully they will regeminate into a similar tree.



Nature

If the Druids gained their knowledge and power through the observation and interaction with Nature over generations; then you can by doing likewise, and thereby you and your descendents will gradually build up a similar bloodline of power.

Being the impatient Americans that we are, you could jump-start the whole process by getting your parents to convert, or even (like the Mormons) retroactively convert your ancestors

in their heavenly rest to your new religious program. That would add several generations to your current status of inheritance.

Divine Inspiration

Surely, if you are a good Druid, and I think you are, then you believe in the Gods (or at least on alternative weeks, like me). Now, the Deities should be technically more powerful than the worshippers (otherwise the roles would be reversed). If the gods still exist, and the Druids listened to them, then you can ask the gods to download that power and information to you from their backup disk, right? This is known as the prayer method. Are there any signs of artistic, ESP, political or musical prodigies in your family line?

Simple Mathematics

Now there is a famous Irish proverb: "In the veins of every Irishman is the blood of a king, and a slave." Kings and slaves are but two sides of the same coin or "The Wheel of Fortune." Let's explore this further:

By argument: There are 600 Million Europeans today. There were only 30 million Europeans during the Black Plague of 13th century. Probably only seven million in 1 AD in Europe during the Roman Empire (which is why a single legion of 10,000 was so HUGE a problem for the Celts). Let's assume that two million of those were Celtic religious practioners (France, Switzerland, North Italy, Spain, Dalmatia, Turkey, Britain, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark/West Germany), with about 20,000 Druids/Intelligentsia (1%) okay?

There are plenty of legends with Druids having offspring. Assume 1.2 kids per Druid (probably three is normal, but child mortality, plagues and war reduce it, plus overlapping descendents) and a 20-year inter-generational period with 100 generations since 1 A.D..

So, you've got 20,000 ancient druids (1.3 to the 100th power which is 8,2817,974.5) producing a whopping grand sum of about 165,6359,490,440.3 currently living Druid descendents at a minimum. And it's a possible 2,535,301,200,456,458,802,993,406,410,7520,000 people, if we use 2.0 kids for calculations; but there are only 8,021,020,016 people on earth now). So with Europe and America and Australia's combined estimated Celtic-descendent population of about 400,000,000 people, you have at least at 40-100% chance of having a Druid ancestor, depending on your calculations, without knowing any more than that your great grandmother was a McWhatzername.

Unfortunately, we don't know their Druid ancestor's name(s) and street postal address(es), but let me assure you by your very presence, that not knowing your ancestor's name will negate your existence or your heritage. I've got lots of ancestors I don't know too well, and I do fine.

Apple and Boat Test

Now if you're a "Christian Druid," congratulations, it gets much more simple!! Since you believe in "Ya*weh, then you believe the first Humans were Adam and Eve (among others). Now Adam and Eve were originally on very close terms with God (as all the Druids were) and lived in a Garden, with intricate association and knowledge of all the plants and creatures of the Earth (in fact they named them all). This would qualify as "Druidic" by many definitions. So if Adam and Eve were Druids and Druidesses, then we all are Druidic descendents. If by chance, non-Druidic people were around (because some women was marrying all these sons of Adams, unless constructing women was a family business for the Adames) then the flood killed all of them all, leaving only Noah's

offspring, who have a direct link to Adam, thus insuring and cementing our Druidic heritage, including the Maori exchange student at your neighbor's house.

I hope that in some way, I've been helpful and reassuring on this fascinating topic. I wish you the best of luck in your search, and hope you get back to me when you find a promising path to your solution.

-Mike the Fool
AD of DC

Celtic Dietary Health Problems

By Eric Powers, Digitalis Grove

Well, you are what you eat, and after discussing junk food and sanitary issues of the Celts, I believe it is time to address the abysmal eating habits of modern Celts, and their health implications. It is a sad fact that as the waves of Germanic people pushed through Europe, the Celts found it was their turn to choose less desirable and more defensible territory. Any visit to a Gaeltacht region of Celtic speaking territory in Brittany or Wales will show you the poor quality of the farming. Now, it is a little known fact that 2,500 years ago, much of Britain and Ireland's barren hills and plains were covered in thick forest full of lions, bears, giant deer, and other monsters. Centuries of degradatory farming erosion, poor arboreal harvesting and other ecological disasters have made many of the bogs and moors of the British Isles. So much for being in harmony with nature. Such a fate awaits the Brazilian rainforest.

For the purpose of the remainder of the essay, we will assume the general French and Belgium and Galician populations are not Celtic. According to the genetic test in the last issue, the English are generally of recent immigrant stock (only back to the 8th century), despite their understandable desire to be aboriginally of the land in which they dwell. Population and ecological pressures have increased the reliance of the Celts to rely on fish, animal and dairy products. The deer hunts of Ireland's roaming army are legendary, as were Robin Hood's in England.



This hunting/gathering/survival lifestyle continues to be eked out in the small crofting communities of the western shores of Scotland and Ireland on the rugged stony coast. A croft is defined as a land holding between one and 50 acres. A crofter's son once defined a croft as "a small area of land surrounded by regulations." For example, there are roughly 2,000 crofts on the Isle of Skye, but of these only 100 or so are large enough to allow a crofter to earn his entire livelihood from the land. The crofts, once laid out to provide homes together with a home food supply are, as one can see, a survival of past economic conditions. Today, the crofter's role is to provide a family home

and a side-line to whatever other job the crofter can obtain. The majority of their working age population have to search elsewhere for employment. Some find seasonal work in the building or service industries while others serve in the oilfields of the North Sea.

I found the health statistics rather surprising. Celtic regions (e.g. highlands) tend to be poorer than Anglo areas, with reduced access to health care, nutritional education, higher incidents of low-rate babies and more farm accidents. Sound familiar? This is all accentuated by the lack of physical exercise among non-farmers/athletes in modern cultures.

We all know that British rockers never smile in photos, not because they are cool and grim, but because they have some of the most nasty teeth in Europe, with about 50% of Scottish adults in 1970 having not a single natural tooth left in their head, now down to "only" 20%; (which is still 12% higher than England) and much worse in the Highlands. So when you think of all those bards, imagine why the music is much better than the singing (which must be hard with dentures.) Of course, it was the introduction of sugar in the 16th century that was a prime culprit.

UK (9%) and Ireland (6%) show the lowest level of mammography for at-risk age women and among the lowest rates for immunization of child-hood diseases in Europe (87%), which is higher than the US (60%). Scotland has the lowest rate of breast-feeding in Europe (only 35% in first six weeks, 15% in highlands) mostly due to factors of poverty and prudity (or at least that's the rumor). The birth rate of Ireland and Scotland is the lowest since the famines of 1855. Access to family planning is less than easy in Ireland. Drug use is about as bad as the US and worse than most of Europe outside of the Netherlands.

Consumption of grain-based products in last 24 hours:

Netherlands 93% Germany 90%

France 87% Spain 77%

UK 73% (30% in Scotland)

Europe 75% USA 64%

Obesity Percentage (by various BMI stats for Male/Female)

Sweden 5.3%/N.A.

Netherlands 8%/10%

England 13%/15%

Germany 17%/19%

USA 32%/33%

Things are improving, and the drinking and smoking statistics are rosier. Smoking (Male/Female)

Europe 45%/29% Ireland 40%/31%

Scotland 34/32 UK 40%/30%

USA 30%/26%

Note: Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer and death in Scotland

Alcohol Consumption Frequency

Infrequent (below 1 per week)/average (2 to 3 per week)/frequent (nearly daily) for male and female showing remarkably high abstinence in Ireland, despite traditional stereotypes.

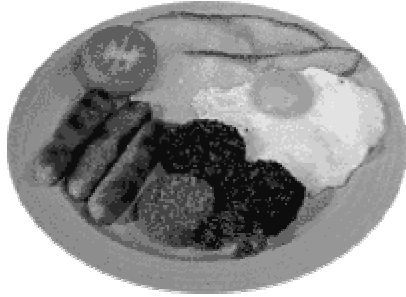
Europe 27/35/36 and 66/29/16

Ireland 41/48/11 and 72/16/2

UK 33/47/20 and 60/30/10

USA 32/45/23 and 53/40/7

Note: Average Scottish Male consumes 20 alcohol units per week (females at 8 units), i.e. a unit is one 12 oz. beer, one cup wine or one shot whiskey.



"The national diet is notoriously high in fat, salt and sugar and low in fruit and vegetables. Next to smoking, our diet is the single most significant cause of poor health, contributing to a range of serious illness, which include coronary heart disease, certain cancers, strokes, osteoporosis and diabetes." How bad is the food really? (Where do you think the restaurant McDonalds was inspired?) Yes, it's rather untasty, probably due to the paucity of strong spices in northern Europe. The old worn saying is that if you want to put on two stone spend a month in Belgium, and to take it off, go to England for a few weeks. (The drink is better in the latter, I believe.) Perhaps Americans are like the pot calling the kettle black.

I remember during my stays at B and Bs in Ireland in 1998, the standard dreaded breakfast "Heartbreak Special" was two links, a thick slice of sweet black pudding (blood sausage), a banger (sardine), two fried eggs, some bacon, a boiled tomato, and a slice of toast with heaps of butter. For the porridge, there was a pitcher of heavy cream; and a cup of coffee. Lard-made biscuits were available on the side. Last year, Mike told me he had similar fare in the Scottish dormitory, and Mairi said Welsh fare was not much better. Think fish and chips or the ubiquitous "crisps" (potato chips in 50 flavors) and candy/tobacco stores.



This is not a newly acquired taste of an enriched society, but the fulfillment of centuries of cultural dreams. I bring you this ancient story, in which a chronically troublesome incarcerated bard is hauled out of chains and brought to cure the king of a demon who had hid inside his gullet. The possession caused unimaginable hunger in the ruler that was draining the wealth of the countryside. MacGonglinney, on promise of his prompt release, told the following story after starving the king

for five days. As the insanely hungry king listened, bound in ropes at the three narrows, the demon inside slowly came further and further out of the King's mouth, until MacGonglinney grabbed it and threw it into the fireplace, curing the king. I leave you with his words:

Vision of Viands

In a slumber visional,
Wonders apparitional
Sudden shone on me:
Was it not a miracle?
Built of lard, a coracle
Swam a sweet milk sea.
With high hearts heroic,
We stepped in it, stoical,
Braving billow-bounds;
Then we rode so dashingly,
Smote the sea so splashingly,
That the surge sent, washingly,
Honey up for grounds.
Ramparts rose of custard all
Where a castle muster'd all
Forces o'er the lake;
Butter was the bridge of it,
Wheaten meal the ridge of it,
Bacon every stake.
Strong it stood, and pleasantly
There I entered presently
Hying to the hosts;
Dry beef was the door of it,
Bare bread was the floor of it,
Whey-curd were the posts.
Old cheese-columns happily,
Pork that pillared sappily,
Raised their heads aloof;
While curd-rafters mellowly
Crossing cream-beams yellowly,
Held aloft the roof.
Wine in well rose sparklingly,
Beer was rolling darklingly,
Bragget brimmed the pond.
Lard was oozing heavily,
Merry malt moved wavily,

Through the floor beyond.
Lake of broth lay spicily,
Fat froze o'er it icily,
'Tween the wall and shore;
Butter rose in hedges high,
Cloaking all it's edges high
White lard blossomed o'er.
Apple alleys bowering,
Pink-topped orchards flowering,
Fenced off hill and wind;
Leek-tree forests loftily,
Carrots branching tuftily,
Guarded it behind.
Ruddy warders rosily
Welcomed us right cosily
To the fire and rest;
Seven coils of sausages,
Twined in twisting passages,
Round each brawny breast.
Their chief I discover him,
Suet mantle over him,
By his lady bland;

Where the cauldron boiled away,
The Dispenser toiled away,
With his fork in hand.
Good King Cathal, royally,
Surely will enjoy a lay,
Fair and fine as silk;
From his heart his woe I call,
When I sing, heroical,
How we rode, so stoical,
O'er the Sea of Milk.-

Aniar MacConglinne--Irish,
12th century-trans.
G. Sigerson, in
Bards of the Gael and Gal
(London Unwin, 1897)

Links:

Scottish Health Statistics:

http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/isd/Scottish_Health_Statistics/SH_S2000/home.htm

Irish Health Statistics:

http://www.doh.ie/statistics/health_statistics/healthst.pdf

Int'l Health Statistics: What it means for the United States.

(Kind of big):

http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ota/Ota_1/DATA/1994/9418.PDF

archaeology, art history, folklore, history, linguistics, literature, and music. Papers should be no more than 20 minutes in length, and abstracts of one page only should be sent by January 15, 2003 to:

Maria Teresa Agozzino (Mabli), Celtic Colloquium Chair
Celtic Studies Program, 6303 Dwinelle Hall, MC 2690
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA or e-mailed to: mabela@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Calendar

Astronomical Samhain, when the Sun is halfway between the fall Equinox and Winter Solstice will occur on Nov 7, 2002 at 4:00 a.m. Pacific Standard Time, or as 15 degrees of Scorpius on Nov 7, at 06:23 a.m. PST.

The Missal-Any is published eight times a year. Post mail subscriptions are \$8.00 and email subscriptions are free. Or write an article or send us a cartoon and receive a year's post mail subscription free. Write The Missal-Any, c/o S. J. Weinberger, 309 63rd St, Apt. C, Oakland, CA 94618.

Miscellany



25th California CelticStudies Conference

The annual meeting of CSANA will be held in conjunction with the annual University of California Celtic Studies Conference on the UC Berkeley campus April 3-6, 2003. Our invited speakers include Sioned Davies (Cardiff University), Patrick Ford (Harvard University), Sarah Higley (University of Rochester), Joseph F. Nagy (University of California, Los Angeles), Diarmuid Ó Giolláin (University College Cork), and Oliver Padel (University of Cambridge).



Submission of abstracts is solicited on a wide variety of Celtic topics, including from the fields of anthropology,

A Druid Missal-Any
Winter Solstice Y.R. XL
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Yule Essay: What is Yule?

Reprinted from A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1982
By Emmon Bodfish

Yule, a minor Celtic High Day, the Midwinter Solstice's sun shines into the mouths of carven graves and the openings of hill tombs. The day was of obvious importance to these megalith builders, and associated with the dead and with regeneration. This is the bottom of the year, and the coldest months are still to follow. Bonfires are lit on hills to call back the Sun, and kept burning all night to celebrate its return. This Celtic tradition may be a cognate of the Norse Yule Log tradition, which is still carried on in the Nordic countries. This use of fire to recall the Sun's fire, (the name for the Sun in Gäidhlig is thought to be derived from the phrase "of the nature of fire," greine, and is of the feminine gender) is an instance of one of the most ancient religious ideas, that of reciprocity.

This concept goes back to the beginnings of religion in the Old Stone Age, as well may the fire lighting ceremonies. As G. Rachel Levy explains, these rites were

"the culmination of the Stone Age religion of reciprocity, in which, by ritual attunement to the rhythm of seasonal change, man shared with Divinities the responsibility for its maintenance so that the ceremonies first introduced to guide the birth and death of the hunter's quarry, were replaced in natural succession by those considered necessary to assist the new year to be born, the very sun to return, (and) the harvest to be cut down."

This correspondence

"was also understood conversely, so that early written documents record (Le Titre d'Horus d'or, by Ann, Fort, translator) that the rising of the Young Year God from his winter sleep in the subterranean chambers held hope for the resurrection or reincarnation of man. Such a belief would seem to have been naturally transmitted from the ideas concerning the case as

mother of rebirth, now reinforced by the lesson of the seeds, through Neolithic ceremonies in which the sense of mutual causality was so compelling. It is demonstrated in the monuments of the dead."



News of the Groves

Carleton

The Carleton Grove has had somewhat of a sleepy term. A number of factors, the weather including, have conspired to give us low turnouts on a number of occasions though we managed to attract a number of new members none the less. Samhain was a fairly simple talking "celebration" which we do annually where each person has the opportunity to talk about endings of the past year that have and are affecting them.

We won't be in session for the Yule season so there are no rituals planned however we are gradually planning for a "Hunt for the Golden Frisbee." Normally at the Fall Equinox we have two loaves of marriage bread each with a ring in it and whoever gets the ring has a ceremonial marriage at Beltane. This year, following in the tradition that whatever couple gets the ring never actually gets married, the recipient of the women's wedding band pleaded having had too many previous marriages. So this year we are offering the hand of the fair Prince of Greenhouse to whoever finds the Golden Fleece. We're hoping to have the hunt shortly after the snow melts but we are still in the planning stages.

—Stephen Crimmins

Side Note: Barry Osborne '66, producer of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, is giving a sneak preview performance for Carleton students on December 13th. Perhaps this contemporary of David Frangquist '66 received some subliminal inspiration from the RDNA?

Akita Grove: News from Japan

All is good here
the snow is deep,
lots of warm beer
Earth is asleep.

Looking with forward to Mike's visit for Christmas. Wish all you could also.

—Nozomi

Amazon Grove: News from Brazil

Research is done. Now anonymously going to an undisclosed location for an unspecified time to drink generic booze for unknown reasons. Perhaps I'll meet you there?"

—Ian

Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.

Things are quiet here. Mairi sent a cryptic e-mail stating that she and Sine are doing well. Eric will graduate in December, and I in May 2003, so it is the end of my official academic training in many way. Two years preschool, 12 years public school, 11 years of College and University. I feel educated enough now to know that I don't know very much.

Earl, our Labrador retriever guide-dog puppy, is now a year old and ready to return to NYC for a more intensive phase of training. We'll receive a labradoodle hybrid puppy in January, so the training begins again.

I'm considering taking pastoral training classes at Howard University on a part-time basis starting next fall, and that could stretch for a few years at low intensity. I've been considering leaving the embassy next summer, and starting a new job in government service.

ARDA 2 is slowly coalescing into its final format, as I'll review with Mark. The plans for next May's 40th Anniversary reunion (and June one also) are moving ahead, as the article in this issue will address further. Make plans early to come to Carleton if you can, or start to plan a local event, if you wish.

—Mike

Eurisko Grove: News from Virginia

We celebrated both Samhain and Halloween this year. Samhain and Halloween have many points in common but are actually different holidays. Halloween is an attempt to manifest nightmare imagery on the physical plane as a way of defeating it. Samhain does not view dark aspects with fear, but rather with acknowledgement. Death can, does and will occur. That dark shape in a darkened corner may in fact be more than just a shadow. Halloween gives rewards for facing what we're afraid of. Costumes are used to confuse and frighten, both the physical and non-physical beings that travel about. The Grove also recently received an Avocado seedling.

Samhain eve saw the last harvest from our window boxes of herbs, mini roses and mums. Samhain helps to psychologically prepare for the hardship of the coming winter. Samhain is the time to honor the dead and the ancestors. The veil between the worlds is considered to be the thinnest, which brings up the obvious question of when are they the thickest. Secular Halloween is a hodge-podge of Celtic folklore and Goth commercialism. Food should be left out as an offering to the spirits. We left apples and candy.

On Halloween we eagerly awaited trick or treaters. Trick or treaters are an exercise in showing hospitality to strangers. This hospitality has a few variations of reward. The more you give the more you get back from the universe. The threat of trick or treat should not be challenged. Having a neighbor's kid angry with you does not help to build community. Various myths tell us of gods and demi-gods appearing as strangers to test the virtue of a person. As human beings we are in a constant state of dying. We also experiment with trying to record ghost voices, to no avail.

Our ancestors always faced the prospect that some of them might not make it thru the winter. This darktime of the year is appropriate to face and explore the fears and phobias within us. Fight those battles till the light of the newborn sun shines on you. I carved a pumpkin guardian with a psychic third-eye for protection, painted a turban squash to look like an exposed brain. The apartment has been decorated in fall foliage. We watched quite a few horror movies. We also rode on a ghost train. This featured such things as the "spirit of the woods," an evil witch, a fire crystal and a "warrior/naturalist" who guarded the woods, wearing a dark blue robe with stars and moons on it.

Now we can't wait for Yule. It's still the most pagan friendly of the secular or religious holidays. For Eurisko Grove, Yule marks the New Year cycle. I know very well that Celtic and Wiccan traditions believe the New Year is celebrated on Samhain. Yet I feel we are as much a part of the culture we live in as the culture we are attuning with. Keeping this in mind, the end of December is the end of the year. Historically, both the Norse and the Romans just to name two also looked upon the winter solstice as the yearly demarcation point. Soon we will start shopping for a potted dwarf spruce, who will end up being with us for the next two years and then planted. This has been a tradition of ours for six years now.

There is also an extreme amount of cross-pollination of secular and religious imagery, most of it falling under the category of pre-Christian. What better way to begin the New Year than with new stuff? Also by having the year change halfway through winter, it helps to put the harsh times into more manageable segments. If we make it to the New Year than the remaining winter won't be so bad because we are magically farther away from it. The scent of cinnamon, apples, and evergreens unite to evoke memories long forgotten.

I have to admit I've been conditioned since childhood to enjoy this time of year. It's also a relief after the somberness of the Samhain season. We plan on a sunrise ritual for Yule. Another long-standing tradition is "Dark Christmas Movies". So far we are planning on "The Murder of Edwin Drood" and "Eyes Wide Shut." Yule dinner will feature goose and Dickens on "Books on Tape."

Bamboo Grove: News from Delaware

Samhain was a mystical, reassuring experience for me. I have always felt awkward with rituals; I'm still trying to figure out how to approach spirits/deities in a formal situation since I'm more used to interacting with them on a more daily, intimate basis. So, I took a bit of my neo-pagan background from my past and did a little quasi-formal ritual, sort of ad-libbing as I went. Everything had to be inside, unfortunately, but the spirits have a sense of humor and gave this uncertain Druid "proof" that they were there and listening!

During the ritual, I talked to the spirits of my ancestors. I was a bit sad because I do not personally know my family line beyond my grandparents, and have only seen a picture of my great-grandmother who lived in a remote part of China. I reflected on the fact that my family tree is basically Christian for as far back as I know, and I wondered if any of my ancestors had ever followed different paths, such as Buddhism (Zen or otherwise), Taoism, etc.

I had taken time a few weeks before Samhain to write out a list of things that I wanted to release from my life, and things I wanted to affirm for the upcoming year. As I read from the sheet I whispered my hopes for the upcoming year to the spirits. After I was finished I gently ripped the paper into strips and lit them in my small cauldron; I burned every piece down to ash to send my requests "on their way." When I got down to the last piece, I gazed into the cauldron and watched it burn brightly and then flicker down into embers. As I watched I noticed a portion of an

affirmation on part of the paper that hadn't burned yet, and to my amazement, the flames flickered out before burning three of the words. It was a significant "sign" for me, and I mentally laughed as I realized that the spirits were indeed listening (and definitely have their own ways to communicate clearly with me)! It was a much-needed reassurance, and will make for a Samhain I will remember for a long time to come.

As for this winter, I don't have any particular "projects" in the works for the Grove, other than making sure that the Arch-Druid gets enough sunlight, water, and doesn't get too cold. (Any suggestions for keeping a bamboo plant happy during the winter indoors? Email me: psyche@udel.edu). Even though this is the Time of Sleep, I have a small personal project in the works to prepare for a possible academic advancement after I graduate this spring (otherwise known as getting applications, recommendations, transcripts, etc. done as well as taking the dreaded GRE test). I like to think of this as nurturing the seed of my future ambitions during this Time of Sleep, and hope to see the results in the spring.

May you all have a Blessed Yule!

~brightmirage~

Oaken Circle Grove: News from Kentucky

Greetings,

The Oaken Circle Grove of Northern Kentucky would like to congratulate a grove couple Tara and Brandon on their handfasting on October 19, 2002. It was a beautiful ceremony and there are photos at http://oaken_circle_grove.tripod.com/oakencirclegroveky/ on the grove photos page. Our grove has finally gathered the paper work for articles of incorporation to become incorporated and then we will be on our way to becoming a not for profit organization. The grove is moving along in many aspects, check out our site to keep informed.

Many Blessings,

Sherry
Founder of the OCG

Swamp Grove: News from Florida

As the Swamp Grove prepares for Solstice, we enter the refreshing cool season that draws so many to our area. Walking through the forest in the everglades is unlike any other place in the US, cypress trees show their roots in the dry autumn and moss hangs heavy on large Florida oaks. It is truly a magical place, worthy of preservation and filled with strange and abundant life. Our small group of Pagans is truly fortunate to be able to experience this sub-tropical wilderness. A happy Solstice to all the reformed Druids in their own magical lands.

Mojo Proto-Grove

We had an extra special Samhain with a lot of effort put into both the ritual, and accoutrements. Also it was mutually agreed upon to officially dissolve the protogrove. A number of us did attend the local Humane Society Bowser Boo Bash, which was a great success, and a lot of fun to boot. We've all decided to at least meet each year to do the Boo Bash together (most of us are neighbors and see each other a lot anyway).

—Juju

MOCC--Muskogee/Mother Grove:

News from Oklahoma

Samhain night. It was time for potluck and partying. Go figure, even the church down the block from us was having a rousing game of bingo. Yippee!!! More than one of the MOCC attendees also grabbed a card or two and sat in on a round of the age-old Samhain favorite. There was a fabulous potluck feast featuring brisket marinated in wine, hot dogs and rigatoni, and it was topped off by everybody bobbing for apples. Even those among us who were frozen by fear of their makeup being messed-up by the water joined in the fun of trying to get an apple. The youngest among us, ages seven and nine, were among the most intelligent at this contest of skill and wit. They simply chomped down on the stem and brought it up, free of the water's icy chill.

Grove of the Ancient Oaks: News from Utah

I had this e-mail request for New of the Grove forwarded to me by my dear friend Inion. She suggested that I send news to you of our new grove being formed here in Utah. Its name is The Grove of the Ancient Oaks. My name is Zack Faust, I am the Arch-druid. We became a grove in early November. We are part of the Missionary Order of the Celtic Cross. We are not a large group, we only have five members. We are happy with what we have. I can be contacted at LLYRBRAE@yahoo.com I am soon to create an e-mail for our group. Thanks for you time and please e-mail me any questions you might have.

With all the blessings of Brighid,

Zack Faust

Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Samhain, a time to remember and honor the ancestors. I can't help but think of Emmon at this time, more so than any other. I arranged a trip up to Mt. Shasta the following week to visit his grave. During the last week in October the Shasta Abbey celebrates the Festival of the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts, which is much reminiscent of our Samhain. Past relatives and friends are remembered by offerings of favorite foods of the deceased placed upon the altar. I was invited to send my offering since I was not able to be there for the ceremony. In the box I included walnuts from a friend's tree, hazelnuts, an organic apple, a small pumpkin, and a beeswax tea light.

Samhain eve was spent up at the cabin. The wood stove had remained untouched and still set for a fire since before his death nearly three and a half years prior. It seemed the fitting occasion to light it. I had thought I would cry when doing that but didn't. I had no special plans or expectations for the evening, no vigil this year. The evening meal consisted of similar foods I had prepared for the offering sent to the Abbey as well as a cheese sandwich. As I was setting it out, it struck me as the right thing to do to set two plates and split the food in to. Keeping with the RDNA Samhain eve tradition of drinking the last of the waters-of-life before the oncoming Season of Sleep, I poured two goblets of the Grove whiskey normally used in the red Ben Franklin chalice. I put on a cassette appropriately entitled "Through the Veil" and lit candles. With the fire glowing and the impromptu feast the evening took on a decidedly festive air, reminiscent of parties Emmon used to hold at High Days. It

suddenly occurred to me that this had become what is called a “dumb supper,” the Samhain custom in Ireland and Scotland of a meal eaten in silence to which the dead are invited and the dead are present as invisible entities. It was at that point I started crying because I could feel that Emmon was happy again.



The Hill of Three Oaks where many of the first services at Carleton were held.

40th RDNA Anniversary Celebration

Mike Scharding, Digitalis Grove

If it is meaningful and convenient for you, we ask you to commemorate the upcoming anniversary in May 2003 by holding a simple service of some type where you live on Saturday, May 3rd or by joining us at Carleton College. Either way, we are both standing on the same Mother-Earth, merely out of sight of each other, and partaking of the same air and feeling the roots of our common past. Keep us in your thoughts that day, as we will towards you.

My simple plan is to surmount poor records by spreading the burden of reaching members to people like you who are reading this letter; even if you won't be attending. By using Alumni records or personal contacts, please just relay this message to a few other people who interacted with the Druids, or who might be interested. I've already reached most of the past Third Orders and Archdruids. There would necessarily be some overlap and redundant efforts involved.

If you do come to Carleton in May, you'll have the unusual chance to interact with current students, something that isn't possible at most Alumni Reunions. Students usually enjoy the chance to hear advice and trade stories with old-timers during this intense time of their spiritual journey. Since it's cooler, there are no annoying mosquitoes. We also promise the largest four birthday candles you are ever going to see!



No reservations are needed, just show up and jump in. Everybody should BYOB, BYOF, and BYOMI (musical instruments) so we can have a fun potluck, no matter how few

(or many) arrive. Until you arrive, you won't know who's there, including yourself. The Beltane (May Day) activities are still loosely scheduled, and will be quite simple, and alternative activities will occur in case of rain. Friends and family welcome. If you come earlier on a weekday, you can peruse the extensive Druid Archives during business hours.

May 2nd (Friday): Interviews, Cooking, and other preparations.

May 3rd (Saturday): Walks in the arboretum, maypole dance, a Beltane 40th service (with the requisite deep and meaningful speeches), more folk-dancing, a picnic, silly games, and contests, an evening bonfire sing-a-long, and some vigils perhaps.

May 4th (Sunday): Farewell at Dawn

If you cannot make it in May, you could always choose to attend the probably larger Annual 2003 Carleton Alumni Reunion, which is on the Midsummer, conveniently enough. I couldn't decide, so I will attend both (since other research commitments bring me to Northfield then), but please choose the more convenient date for your schedule and budget. Either will be fun.

June 19th (Thursday): People arrive, folk-dancing may break out.

June 20th (Friday): Late night bonfire and singing (or perhaps Sat?)

June 21st (Saturday): Dawn walk, Noon-ish 40th service at Hill, vigils

June 22nd (Sunday): Sunrise farewell at the hill.



Performers at a play on Mai Fete Island at the May Festival at Carleton in the 1940s and 1950s, a local event of some renown.

Concrete details on location and times will firm up in April at: www.geocities.com/mikerdna/anniversary.html

Our events will be listed in the standard schedule of Alumni activities (we may also attend related groups' activities like arb-walks and folk-dancing). The difference for June will be: no current students, more Alumni events, more mosquitoes!, 95F weather, and cheaper on-campus housing. Non-Alumni should carefully arrange lodging, and contact me if they're puzzled.

Suggested Websites for the Reunion

Up to the week current information on how the May celebration plans are here

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/anniversary.html>

Similar plans for the June Carleton Alumni reunion.

<http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/reunion.html>

800-acre arboretum map
<http://www.acad.carleton.edu/campus/arb/map/arbwhole.html>
 Good Carleton Campus Map
<http://www.carleton.edu/visitors/maps/campus/CarletonCollege.gif>
 Information on visiting Carleton and finding a place to stay. Don't forget that camping and crash space!
<http://www.carleton.edu/visitors/>
 "Cows, Colleges, and Contentment" is the town slogan, and name of an Irish Bar there.
www.northfield.org/
 What adventures lurk in the adjoining town?
www.northfieldchamber.com/pages/tourism.html
 More on the lodging available, for those not interested in furtive camping.
www.northfieldchamber.com/pages/lodging.html

Northfield Hotels
(use www.mapquest.com to locate)

Archer House, 212 Division Street. (507) 645-5661 or (800) 247-2235. Adjacent to campus, quaint and folksy. \$70-\$120.
 College City Motel, 875 Highway 3 North. (507) 645-4426. Cheap, reasonable. One mile from campus, \$50-\$80.
 Country Inn Motel, 300 South Highway. (507) 645-2286 or (800) 456-4000. About two miles away, \$70-\$90.
 AmericInn Motel and Suites, meeting of South Highway 3 and 19. (507) 645-7761. About 1,200 yds. away, \$65-\$95.
 Super 8 Motel, Highway 3 South. (507) 663-0371 or (800) 800-8000. About three miles from campus, \$60-\$90.
 River View Legacy Motel, Highway 3 and St. Olaf Ave. (507) 645-9980. About one mile from campus, \$60-80.

Dundas (an adjacent town)
 Another Time, 305 Railway Street, (507) 645-6367.



**A Sociological Look at the RDNA at
 Carleton College**
Or 'The Epistle of Irony'
Part Three and the Last

Section IV

Is Reformed Druidism a Religion?

There is an unwritten rule that whatever any Druid may say about him or herself, no one is to make categorical claims regarding the entire movement. Druidism can be and has been a religion for its individual members. It has never claimed itself to be a religion. Druidism is above all a system of inquiry into life, nature and meaning. Depending on how one takes that, the movement could be viewed either way. The official Druidic

statement has been that the RDNA does not affirm or deny the validity of any religion, including itself.

The founders of Reformed Druidism certainly never intended to start a religion. Indeed, the persistence of the movement beyond the elimination of the Chapel requirement took many of the founders by surprise. David Fisher left the movement early on because he had begun to fear that he had helped to start something that was becoming dangerously close to a real religion. Its function as a protest was fulfilled, and yet the group remained. "For a great many Druids, the RDNA had introduced the possibility of taking personal responsibility for understanding and believing one's own faith."¹¹

Druidism continued because people continued to find it meaningful and useful beyond its initial function as a creative protest. Still, did that make the RDNA a religion? The founders were careful not to call it such, though they wished it to appear as one for political purposes, and the movement has remained deliberately vague on this question ever since. Part of the reason for this vagueness is the fear of the 'fossilization theory.' If the RDNA had indeed found something meaningful in the realm of religion, it was felt that it had done so through its very simplicity. If defining themselves as a religion--or anything else--would engender the complexity and rigidity that people had joined the movement to avoid, they wanted no part of it.



View of Carleton over Lyman Lakes.

One of the consequences of this refusal was the gradual splintering of the original RDNA into innumerable branches. Every so often, someone would enter the movement who felt that it should be further defined. Each time this happened, after a brief struggle to change the whole RDNA, a new splinter group would form centered around the rebel and his or her followers. At present, so far as I can tell, there are nearly two dozen separate and related branches, all bearing the name 'Druid,' all spawned by definition or methodological disagreements. The first and most drastic of these schisms began in 1974 over the question of whether the RDNA should declare itself and its members exclusively pagan. This was exactly the sort of thing that many of the Druids--especially those for whom the Carleton grove had been influential--wanted to avoid. They loved the fact that one did not have to renounce any religious beliefs to become a Druid, and that the Druids brought together people of all different faiths to search together in a friendly, healthy manner. Others felt differently though, and a new group was formed.¹²

¹¹ ARDA pp. 339.

¹² See Scharding for a thorough discussion of this initial split, known within the movement as the 'Isaac wars.' Hansen also gives a solid cataloguing of the extant Druid groups in the

The old RDNA remained as it was, happily undefined and unsettled as to the religious question. Even in their second great interaction with authority, which seemed to hinge upon whether the RDNA represented an actual religion or not the Druids managed to escape without really settling the issue.¹³

From a research perspective the question remains. Is the Reformed Druid movement a religion? Is it a 'real religion,' whatever that means? Is it something to which one can legitimately apply the theories of Weber, Marx, and Schleiermacher as I intend shortly to do? It is apparent by now that I, at least, regard it as, if not a religion per se, at least something to which many of the great religious theories and debates are applicable. If I did not, all the time I have put into this project would be seen as wasted.¹⁴

In what ways can the RDNA be considered a religion? Eliade defined the base of all religious experience as the personal experience of sacred reality or Other. Schleiermacher followed him in stating that it was the encounter between the finite and the infinite, which is the origin and object of all religion. To my mind, it is with exactly this encounter that Druidism deals. It is almost beyond question that on any functional level human beings are finite creatures. Through Druidism they engage freely in the spiritual search--the individual quest for understanding of the sacred. Certainly Druidism can and has dealt with all of the classical religious problems of ontology, metaphysics, soteriology, and eschatology, not to mention that of theodicy, the celebrated 'question of evil.' It has done so, however, on a purely individual level. Druidism never teaches that any particular thing is or is not the case--it simply teaches people to learn and decide for themselves.



The mysterious Hadzi sculpture in front of the Carleton Library, many legends abound it.

All of the classic problems and issues of religion are discussed at Druidic meetings and debated at great length from a variety of views but in the end it is up to each individual to decide what to believe. What the RDNA does is to create a place where people of many different religions can come together to share their traditions and learning. Scharding credits this persistence to the delight in the possibility of taking personal responsibility for one's own faith. The movement had shown

United States today, their relationship to one another, and how each came to be.

13 This was the almost famous 'Smiley Case' which will be discussed further below.

14 Or as a furthering of the great and subtle joke that some have seen Druidism as being!

people experientially "the benefits of learning from people from other faiths in a non-hostile forum of interaction."¹⁵

The insight of the Druids, Scharding writes,

"was that if the same story about, say, a bird making its nest, can be interpreted by all religions as a useful analogy for their own religious beliefs, then people of all religions could benefit from getting together and hearing that same story.... As long as dogmatic theological statements remain out of the stories, the group can enjoy each other's company."¹⁶

It has often been denied that Reformed Druidism is a religion because it boasts no dogma or theology. 'How can that be a religion,' we often hear. 'It doesn't teach anything!' The short answer is that Druidism teaches people how to learn, not what is true. It will show you how to walk--not where to travel. In this it is exactly as much a religion as are the Zen Buddhist schools, or, for that matter, Taoism. The theories of the great sociologists of religion are usefully applicable to these systems. I believe that, even if it denies being a religion itself, they are no less applicable to Reformed Druidism.

There is one other problem that ought to be addressed. The question of what it would mean to declare the RDNA a religion. In a sense the question is academic because the movement intentionally never claims to be one. But from a certain perspective the question remains. If Reformed Druidism declared itself to be a fully-fledged religion like any other, would it in effect be denying all religious validity? The argument runs vaguely as follows. Reformed Druidism affirms and denies no religious validity by its own admission. But the essence of religion seems to be a profound respect for the importance and validity of a personal encounter with the sacred. If the RDNA calls itself a religion just like the others, is it stating, in effect, that religious experience is not worth validating? The essence of religious tolerance is not unconditional acceptance of differences but rather an abiding respect for the sacredness of the other's Other. Druidism appears not to contain this. To put it differently, if Druidism includes itself in the set of Religions, is it saying that a religion does not have to affirm or deny anything at all? Druidism does not appear to contain any sacred. By calling itself a religion is it saying that there is no sacred to religion?¹⁷

I do not believe that this is the case. First of all, Druidism never declared itself, as such, to be a religion. If its members do so, that is their own affair, but almost invariably Druidism mutates and develops into something subtly different and much

15 ARDA pp. 339

16 ARDA pp. 341

17 I confess that I do not completely understand this argument and have not given it the best statement or defense possible. I would gratefully welcome any clearer formulations of it.

It is almost regrettable that there has never been a serious philosophical study of the Reformed Druid movement. Druidism seems such a valuable tool of inquiry that one could see the attraction in developing a solid understanding and perhaps metaphysic of it. But it is not at all clear to me at this point how one would go about doing this, nor even that it should be done. It is not that I doubt Druidism could take the probing, but the defining that it would almost certainly entail seems against the spirit of the system. It may be that anything that was developed in such a manner would become yet another splinter group, another branch of the movement that would leave its original roots unchanged.

more complex as soon as it is adopted by a lucid individual rather than a group. Secondly, Druidism does hold an abiding respect for other experiences of the sacred. It simply holds their expressions, through theology, poetry, art, and philosophy as secondary portrayals of that primary experience. The experience of the sacred is holy and respected, whoever happened to have it. Their depiction of it is granted only as much validity as anyone else's. It is taken as one of many fingers pointing at the moon, not the moon itself. The validity of any and all experiences of the sacred stand. Religious expressions are viewed as mutable. Finally, Druidism itself would never--nor would any Druid that I know--state that there is no sacred in religion. It would merely insist that we each critically and honestly examine our own experiences, religious and otherwise, to seek out and understand the sacred within them.

Section V

Sociological Theory and the Reformed Druids

Of all the classical social theories, those of Friedrich Schleiermacher seem to most accurately describe Reformed Druidism.¹⁸ Schleiermacher divided the depictions of religion in his time into those reducing it to functions of the will, reason, and imagination. When viewed as such, the primary vehicle for religious expression became morality, philosophy and art, respectively. Schleiermacher believed that each of these conceptions left out something crucial about the nature of religion and so posited a fourth category. The primary faculty of religion, he felt, was feeling. Religion, he posited, was the encounter of the finite to the infinite. Feeling was that by which we experience this encounter. As pure feelings are essentially incommunicable between sane humans, other means of expressing the encounter must be utilized. According to Schleiermacher, morality, philosophy, art, theology, rituals, laws, legends, and even history are all secondary means of trying to express this primary experience. As such, have no final or absolute validity in the domain of religion! Only feeling can convey the primary experience, and feeling is essentially impossible to communicate.



Schleiermacher's view of religion is a profound call for tolerance. If all theologies and dogmas, all morals and rituals are only secondary expressions of the sacred, then even religious beliefs that completely antagonize one's own can be tolerated.

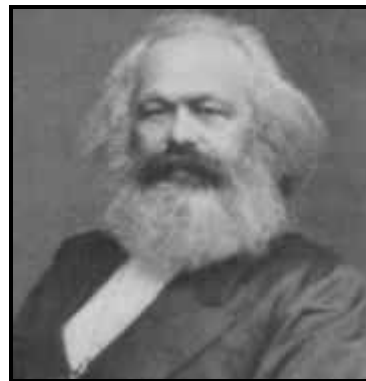
18 In discussing the sociology of the movement, I do not intend to focus here on social factors leading to or even influencing the Reformed Druids. Michael Scharding discusses some of these including Judeo Christian influences, the influence of Asian religions, of the 'Sixties,' of Carleton, and toys with the possibility of Fraternal influences in the creation of the RDNA. Instead I intend to look at the applicability of some of the classical sociological theories to Druidism, leaving the discussion of factors to those who know more about them.

People can realize that it is only the details of expression that they are fighting about when there may be no real disagreement over the feeling of the sacred. This view is almost identical to that espoused by Reformed Druidism. They too regard all expressions of religious truth to be equally valid as secondary indicators of an inexpressible reality that is never the less to be sought by each individual. They too exhibit a unilateral tolerance for all systems of religious belief and practice.¹⁹

Because no single expression of sacrality can be seen as being its primary experience, people interested in approaching that sacred must engage in a constant process of interpretation of these secondary expressions. This hermeneutic circle of translation and interpretation is inherent to the Druidic search.

It is interesting that by both of these views religious experience and validity must remain forever uniquely individual phenomena. Until it is possible to accurately communicate pure feeling, neither the Schleiermachers nor the Druids of the world will ever be able to convey to another what exactly their encounters with the Other--the infinite--were like. All forms of expression prove not only inadequate for the searcher's understanding of religion, but also for the sage's communication of religious understanding. The consequent of this, were everyone to operate within this model of religious understanding, is a plurality of completely unique experiences of the sacred, where each person honored the validity of other's experiences, and realized that no one's expressions of that feeling were any more adequate than their own.

Karl Marx had rather different conception of religion. Unfortunately his understanding of the phenomena was rather stunted by his hatred of it. Marx's insights into the nature of economics and political theory are profound; it is a shame he could not apply the same clarity of thought to the study of religion. It has been argued that Marx's statements on religion are inconclusive and contradictory, making it rather hard to discern what he actually thought on the subject, but from his critiques of Feuerbach, and of Bauer in *On the Jewish Question* a synthesis of sorts can be made.



It seems that Marx held that the ideas of religion emerged from social powerlessness. Religion served, in his mind, as a superstructure to maintain and perpetuate the economic base, which gave rise to it. It did this by maintaining the social class structure and placating the lower classes with promises of something better to come--so long as they held their peace for the time being. At the same time it seems that Marx held that religion emerged from alienation in the realm of civil society--the same force that produced divergent political and economic

19 Within reason. Someone whose religious practice involved destroying the natural world on principle, or who ritually murdered random folks would not be tolerated. But this would be on behavioral grounds rather than religious ones.

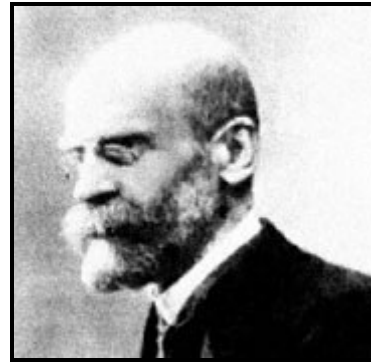
systems. Alienation leads to the objectification of an expression of one's self--or one's culture--which then is imagined as being independent of the thing it is an expression of. This is idolatry in Marx's view--the worship of something you yourself have created.²⁰

It seems, though, that none of these ideas shed any particular light on Reformed Druidism. Druidism did not arise out of social powerlessness, does not maintain any class structure, and has no economic bearing what-so-ever. It also posits no higher being, objectified or otherwise, that could be viewed as a created and forgotten idol of civil alienation. Instead it seems that the RDNA emerged and has been sustained primarily through curiosity. Furthermore, Druidism does not seek--or serve--to maintain any authority, including its own, other than that of intellectual honesty, which is operative on a solely personal level. Druidism does take a certain delight in frustrating the authority of others, especially that which is seen as arbitrary, restrictive or simply absurd. In this sense it could be seen as a reaction to authoritarian structures, but not at all in the way that Marx envisioned. The RDNA has had only two major interactions with authority, and while one of them was the purpose of the movement's initiation, the struggle against an authority has never since proved a motivating factor in the movement's continuation.²¹

Another sociologist whose theories mesh oddly with the RDNA is Emile Durkheim. Durkheim held fundamentally that religion is not irrational--not at all a function of superstition and error, as others have often maintained. All religious experience is the experience of the power of society in his view. The immediate fascination of this view is that no society can ever exist without religion. He also believed that to understand religion we must go back to its base: totemism. On at the same time he held that as a society changes, its god must too. In totemism the individual identifies and becomes one with the totem, which in turn unifies and expresses the nature of his or her social group. As societies advance this identification becomes intellectualized and disguised. By the time a society reaches a reasonably advanced stage its conception of the totem has evolved into a fairly abstract, usually singular god. Along the way this conception of the sacred has been purged of all definable qualities. To adequately represent and unify a very simple social group was easy--they could all be seen to manifest attributes of the bear, for instance. As people specialize and society develops, one definable vision of 'god' can no longer depict them all equally. By abstracting more and more-- and by removing all human characteristics--a society's god becomes more philosophic, beyond all description and understanding, all in the attempt to represent as many different objectified people as possible. The eventual and evident end of this so far as religion goes, is that a society will either have to simplify itself drastically to preserve its conception of god, or the individual itself will become seen as sacred--bypassing the objective representation of the individual as a totem, god, or anything else.

Druidism seems to be an exemplification of this second course. The very conception of god has been objectified away to nothing, and we are left with the individuals again, knowing that the sacred is important, but realizing anew that it is basically unknown. Each individual must seek out their own understanding of the sacred and, in doing so, it appears that each

individual actually becomes in some sense sacred. While Reformed Druidism itself certainly did not begin as totemism and evolve to something else, it is entirely possible that the society from which it arose did. It may be that the emergence of the RDNA is the exact fulfillment and continuation of Durkheim's theory on religious evolution. It emerged at a time when society had diversified to the extent where not even a completely abstract and indescribable god without any qualities could represent every member of that society--for people are not themselves abstract. A specific conception of a personal deity could represent individuals better than an abstraction.



In this case the theory does shed useful light upon the RDNA. The movement is seen as the natural result of societal change and the forerunner of a greater degree of individual awareness and responsibility for religion soon to come. Indeed, as one looks at the kinds of religious movements that have been emerging since the 1960's when Druidism began one can see that many of them embody just this individualization of the sacred--though none of them do so as simply and carefully as do the Reformed Druids. I need merely instance the vast neo-pagan movement, the Church of All worlds, and other similar organizations where any non-socially murderous religious belief is tolerated, and where the church will ordain anyone as a legal minister for the asking.

On the other hand, Durkheim insists that all religious experience is the experience of the power of society. The Druidic path is one that can be followed without reference to society at all. It is useful to talk to others, to read the writings of sages past, or to ponder the teachings of other religions, but the essence of Druidism is clear and careful thinking about the world--a skill that could be practiced by the last man on earth. In addition, most, if not all, of the religious experiences reported by Reformed Druids have taken place in utter solitude. It is in their aloneness with nature that many of the Druids find themselves closest to the sacred. One could argue that if the individual itself has become sacred it is only natural that he or she would feel closest to the sacred when alone with themselves, but this argument smacks strongly of sophistry. It is also possible that the religious experience a person feels when alone is simply the transcendental power of society that they have absorbed and carried with them manifesting itself like a voice in the wilderness. Given the feeling and noetic content of many of these experiences I must seriously doubt that this is the case. I have yet to see a clear and convincing argument in its favor, but mention it because I cannot refute it completely.

Finally, Durkheim's description and justification of the social contract meshes nicely with Reformed Druidic thought. For him it is the inherent sacrality of each individual that makes it important for us not to break our promises to each other. For the Druids, an inviolate respect for the rights of each individual is inherent to the movement. Life is inherently sacred, many of them hold. No one has the right to violate that.

20 In this understanding of Marx I am deeply indebted to professor Nader Saiedi of Carleton College.

21 The first was the successful attempt to get the mandatory chapel requirement revoked. The second was the 'Smiley Affair' beginning in 1967 when the RDNA successfully stalled the US Military out of Drafting one of their priests. See the Carleton Archives, Internal correspondence, and pp. 345-6 of ARDA.

Section VI

Conclusion

I hope that I have at least demonstrated that the Reformed Druids of North America, while not being a religion in the strictest sense, comprise a movement to which the sociological theories of Schleiermacher, Marx, Durkheim and others are applicable. I believe that much can be learned about the movement by seriously applying the theories of these and other writers, and by examining and developing the philosophic background of the RDNA. I hope that others will continue this search, and if they ever find from within the movement that they are acting against its spirit, that they will listen to the dictates of their hearts before forging ahead or dropping their studies.

What I am not sure that I have demonstrated is that the Reformed Druids actually embody a definable and distinct set of people that could be studied as a religious group. I think that what binds them together is the spirit of their search, the shared history of the movement, and their individual acceptance of the simple tenets. If that is not enough, to convince the reader, I ask you to consider how the worlds. Christians can be considered part of one movement, embracing as they do both the Catholic Church and the Quaker meeting halls.

Finally, let me say that for the most part, the confusion as to who is and isn't a Druid shows up on paper more than it does in life. This seems to be because, despite the changes, there has never really been any doubt as to who the Druids amongst people were. As Isaac Bonewits writes,

"The role of the Druid has always been clear- scholar, and artist, poet, and priest, philosopher and magician--the one who seeks, preserves and expends the highest wisdom her or his people are capable of handling safely, and who uses the knowledge and inspiration for the benefit of their community." ²²

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The Canny Conifers

By Sam Peeples

Pine Trees, Firs, Spruces, Yews, Larches. How wonderful these trees are, the evergreens (except for the larch) that have survived not only millions of years of munching by dinosaurs, but have held their own through bitter winters and ice-ages. Coniferous trees generally don't lose their needles in the winter, and house seeds in cone-like structures, thus their name. Their narrow leaves and flexible branches let snow fall off easily, and conserve moisture in the summer.

Etymology

The Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is known in Irish as Giuis, Scots Gàidhlig as Giubhais (also known as Peith), and Pin in Welsh, but it is actually found from Spain to Siberia. Its nickname in the timber trade is "redwood" or "deal." The Yew is from the family Taxaceae and is known in Irish as Iur, Welsh is Ywen. Juniper is of the Cupressaceae family and found mostly in Southern England, US and Europe, and has no Celtic name, anymore. Sometimes, the name "pine" is used loosely for any tree in the pine family Pinaceae. In North America, that family contains larch, true fir, spruce, hemlock, and Douglas-fir. A tree with needles is not a Pinus if:

- the tree has bundles of a dozen or more needles; needles are soft, flat, in brushlike clusters on short spur-like shoots; deciduous not evergreen--then the trees are larches or tamaracks, *Larix*.
- its needles are flat, often with a notch at the end; needles grow in two ranks, directly and singly from the branch, and have a plump base that leaves a round depression on the branch. Cylindrical cones are upright and disintegrate on the branch--then the trees are true firs, *Abies*.
- its needles are short and not bundled but have a stalk and four-sides; they spiral from persistent peg-like bases; the naked twigs are rough and warty--then the trees are spruces, *Picea*.
- its needles flat, with blunt ends; the needles are in two ranks like the fir, but blunt, shorter, and fatter; dark-green and shiny above, pale below with two slim lines--then the trees are hemlocks, *Tsuga*.
- its needles are flat with pointed tips and linear; they grow directly from the branch; the leaf scar is small and raised (for the true fir it is larger and depressed); each needle narrows at the base into a short, thin stem. Cones hang down with three-point bracts--then the trees are Douglas-firs, *Pseudotsuga*.

By the way, the verb "to pine" has no direct connection with the tree, but when pines die they often remain standing long after the life has left them, just like unrequited lovers who die of a broken heart. According to Merriam Webster:

Main Entry: pine

Function: intransitive verb

Inflected Form(s): pined; pining

Etymology: Middle English, from Old English *pinian* to suffer, from (assumed) Old English *pin* punishment, from Latin *poena*--more at PAIN

Date: 14th century

1: to lose vigor, health, or flesh (as through grief): LANGUISH

2: to yearn intensely and persistently especially for something unattainable (wealth lost their for pined still)



Physical Description

Scots Pine is the only native pine in Britain, it reaches 40 meters and lives about 150 years, with some as long as 520. Sometime you get the tall narrow type, but often it splits trunks. The paired needles are about five inches and last about two to three years. Their spread to the British Isles from the continent preceded the disappearance of the land bridge 10,000 years ago and reaching Scotland by 6,000 years ago. It only inhabits 1% of its original range of 1,500,000 hectare, and is primarily found in the West Highlands, having been supplanted by faster growing trees on tree farms. It has naturally been more common in the mountains and areas of elevation. Male and female flowers appear on the same tree, with the female often a bit higher on the tree, using wind pollination. They flower in May, but the seeds must wait two winters to germinate (on the third year after fertilization) and the seeds are tiny, about 120,000 per kilogram. They travel about 70 meters from the tree, and then can skip across the snows for a few more kilometers. They like to find exposed soil, such as that dug up by a rooting boar or a forest fire. The trees are often coated in lichen, which helps to fix nitrogen and then nourishes the soil when it falls off the tree. Some fungi also work in harmony with the tree. Another 45 types of insects, plants and animals (like the Scottish crossbill and Capercaillie) are only found near pine trees in Scotland. Several larger species like (wild boar, beaver, brown bear, moose, lynx and wolf) used to be denizens of the Caledonian forest.

By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries vast quantities of pine were used for pit props, telegraph poles and railway sleepers. Coinciding with this relentless timber extraction came

the Highland Clearances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since much of the countryside was denuded of people, there was nobody to manage the regeneration of the pine woods; instead the often-absent landowners introduced huge flocks of sheep and herds of deer that soon held sway across the old forests, systematically munching through the emerging seedlings. As old trees were removed wholesale, the source of seed disappeared; and, unlike broadleaf trees, cut pine stumps will not regenerate new growth but simply die in the ground. What little management there may have been was totally inadequate. The result was that by 1970 only an estimated 25,000 acres of native pinewood was still standing.

The Yew is only a medium-sized tree found naturally in dense shade of Oak woods. It is often used for hedging or making weird animal topiary shapes. It is found across the European continent and British Isles. Its flowers are in March and red fleshy berries are in October. Almost all parts of the Yew (except the red fleshy berries) are EXTREMELY POISONOUS, so great care should be taken before messing with this plant. Birds swallow the aril (red part) and then deposit the seeds in the course of their work. The seeds go dormant for about 18 months in the ground, but it works well by planting cuttings from the tree. The tree is best known for its extreme longevity, some specimens living two or three thousand years and becoming simply enormous in girth.

Juniper is a small tree or bush. With a whitish bloom in May and whose ripen seeds are distributed by birds in October, and then goes dormant until spring before germinating.

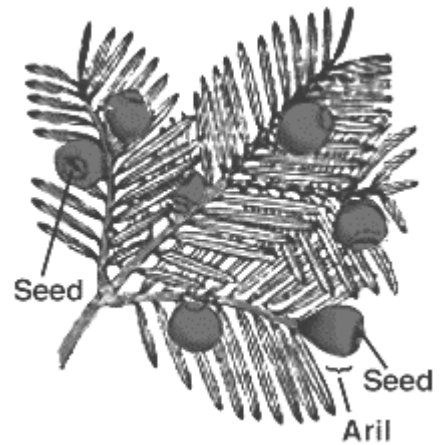


Physical Uses

The pine is a strong, general purpose timber with natural preservative qualities, making it very suitable for use outdoors, fencery, joinery, flooring, boxes, telegraph poles, fiberboard, ship beams and masts (witness Beinn nan Sparra, Hill of Spars, in Glen Affric). The pitch from the tree was used to fill cracks in planks and beer casks. For higher resin content they were harvested on the waxing moon. The resin content is so high that some pine trees will remain standing for 50-100 years after dying without decay.

Yew produces a very durable, beautifully smooth, gold-colored wood with a wavy grain that is often used for furniture, weapons and tool handles. Sometime used as an expensive veneer, when of good quality. In Europe, yew wood was used for making bows, while on the northwest coast of North America, the Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) is used by the Haida and other tribes for making masks and boxes.

The Juniper is a very aromatic sapwood that is fairly strong and durable. And can be used for charcoal and pencils. Juniper oil can be distilled, and berries are used to flavor meats and Gin.



Mythological Appearance

In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer relates various stories involving pine trees from classical mythology, which may or may not have been Scots pines, such as how the ancient Egyptians buried an image of the god Osiris in the hollowed-out center of a pine tree. He writes that, "It is hard to imagine how the conception of a tree as tenanted by a personal being could be more plainly expressed." As a symbol of royalty the pine was associated with the Greek goddess Pitthea, and also with the Dionysus/Bacchus mythology surrounding the vine and wine making, probably as fertility symbol. Worshippers of Dionysus often carried a pine-cone-tipped wand as a fertility symbol and the image of the pinecone has also been found on ancient amulets as a symbol of fertility.



For the Romans the pine was an object of worship during the spring equinox festival of Cybele and Attis. As an evergreen tree the pine would also have symbolized immortality.

The pine was held sacred to Pan, the Roman Faunus, and in his Eclogues Vergil describes the pastoral god's home on Mt. Maenalus in Arcadia. Propertius stresses the god's fondness for the tree, and Horace, for his part, dedicates a pine to the goddess Diana in a famous ode.

The Romans celebrated the winter solstice with a fest called Saturnalia in honor of Saturnus, the god of agriculture. They decorated their houses with greens and lights and exchanged gifts. They gave coins for prosperity, pastries for happiness, and lamps to light one's journey through life.

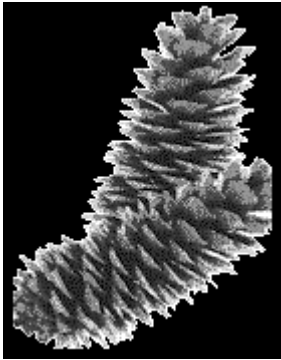
The Scots pine groves or "shaman forests" scattered over the dry grasslands of eastern Siberia were considered sacred by the Buriats, a Mongolian people living around the southern end of Lake Baikal. These groves were to be approached and entered in silence and reverence, respectful of the gods and spirits of the wood.

While learning about the habits of a bear, I learned the following American Indian saying. "When a pine needle falls, the bear smells it, the Eagle sees it and the rabbit hears it."

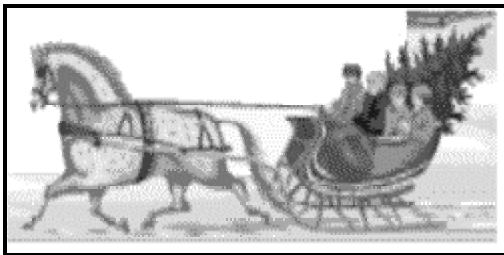
Folk Customs

- All parts of the Yew tree are poisonous except the fleshy covering of the berry, and its medicinal uses include a recently discovered treatment for cancer.
- Coniferous trees are especially popular for planting in cemeteries and churches with their promise of "eternal life." Many Celtic churches were famous for their enormous Yews planted in the adjoining cemetery.
- Late in the Middle Ages, Germans and Scandinavians placed evergreen trees inside their homes or just outside their doors to show their hope in the forthcoming spring. Our modern Christmas tree evolved from these early traditions or the Yule log traditions.
- The Christmas tree was popularly believed to have been introduced by Prince Albert (another German) by Queen Victoria (another German) to the British Isles in the 19th century with the custom of hanging blown glass baubles from Thuringia. The custom soon made its way to America in the 1880s. Other believe that the Christmas tree tradition most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio, adds Robson. The Christmas tree market was born in 1851 when Catskill farmer Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds of evergreens into New York City and sold them all. By 1900, one in five American families had a Christmas tree, and 20 years later, the custom was nearly universal. Six species account for about 90 percent of the nation's Christmas tree trade. Scotch pine ranks first, comprising about 40 percent of the market, followed by Douglas fir, which accounts for about 35 percent. The other big sellers are noble fir, white pine, balsam fir and white spruce.
- Romans believed that pinecones imparted both physical and moral strength.
- Many Orthodox Jews are still buried in plain pine coffins when swaddling is insufficient for local ordinance codes.
- Pine was sometimes used to make an expectorant or inhalants, sometimes for antiseptic use.
- The Pine tree is an evergreen; its old title was "the sweetest of woods." It was known to the Druids as one of the seven chieftain trees of the Irish.
- Mix the dried needles with equal parts of juniper and cedar and burn to purify the home and ritual area.
- The cones and nuts can be carried as a fertility charm.

- A good magickal cleansing and stimulating bath is made by placing pine needles in a loose-woven bag and running bath water over it.
- To purify and sanctify an outdoor ritual area, brush the ground with a pine branch. The scent of Pine is useful in the alleviation of guilt.



- A persistent theme in the folklore of Scots pine is their use as markers in the landscape. In the Highlands there is a recurrent theme that they were used to mark burial places of warriors, heroes and chieftains. In areas further south where the sight of Scots pine may have been more unusual and their use would have stood out more, they can be seen to mark ancient cairns, trackways and crossroads. In England they were commonly used to mark not only the drove roads themselves, but also the perimeters of meadows on which passing drovers and their herds could spend the night.
- Glades of Scots pines were also decorated with lights and shiny objects, the tree covered in stars being a representation of the Divine Light.
- Juniper grown by the door discourages thieves.
- The mature Juniper berries can be strung and hung in the house to attract love.



Obligatory Food Reference

"Alba," the name is Gaelic for Scotland. Introduced by the Vikings, spruce and pine ales were very popular in the Scottish Highlands until the end of the 19th Century. Many early explorers, including Captain Cook, used spruce ale during long sea voyages since it prevented scurvy and ill health. Shetland spruce ale was said to "stimulate animal instincts" and give you twins. Alba is brewed to a traditional Highland recipe from Scots pine and spruce shoots picked during early spring. Pure malted barley is boiled with the young sprigs of pine for several hours then the fresh shoots of the spruce are added for a short infusion before fermentation. Tawny brown strong ale with spruce aroma, rich Malt texture, complex wood flavor and lingering finish. Described by the Scottish press as "Light pale ale with champagne."

Quotes and Notable Literary References

Who leaves the pine-tree, leaves his friend,
Unnerves his strength, invites his end.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Woodnotes

I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines.

--Henry David Thoreau, 1817-1862

The pine tree seems to listen, the fir tree to wait: and both without impatience: they give no thought to the little people beneath them devoured by their impatience and their curiosity.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, # 176.

You can live for years next door to a big pine tree, honored to have so venerable a neighbor, even when it sheds needles all over your flowers or wakes you, dropping big cones onto your deck at still of night.

—Denise Levertov, *Threat*

Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel.

—Aldo Leopold

There was a handsome male mockingbird that sang his heart out every morning during the nesting season from the top of a tall Norfolk Pine tree. Last week the tree was cut down. The mockingbird and his song are gone. I can't put a dollar value on the tree nor on the mockingbird nor on his song. But I know that I--and our whole neighborhood--have suffered a loss. I wouldn't know how to count it in dollars.

—Jacquelyn Hiller



A yew tree in a graveyard in Wales.

Two Coniferous Songs

“Only Yew!”

Filmed by Patrick Haneke,
Akita Grove, Year 2001.
For the Public Domain.
Original "Only You" By the Platters

(Spoken Intro by William Watson)
*Old emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
Girt with thy guard of dotard kings
What ages hast thou seen retire
Into the dusk of alien things?*
Only yew is found near every church.
Only yew will neither lean nor lurch.
It grows a hard, tight grain,
Makes bow staves both straight and true.
It fills my heart with awe for only yew.

Only yew can live o'er four thousand years
Only yew can outlast our worst fears.
Only yew and yew alone
Laughs at the passage of time.
Whose name is famed and so easy to rhyme.

Only yew can guard the graves at night.
Only yew's leaves can kill with just one bite.
I understand the magic that you do
Making dreams come true.
Yes! The one and only yew.

“O Tannenbaum”

Words by Ernst Anschuetz
Melody: Traditional folk tune

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie grun sind deine Blatter.
Du grust nicht nur zur Sommerzeit,
Nein auch im Winter wenn es schneit.
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie grun sind deine Blatter!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!
Wie oft hat nicht zur Winterszeit
Ein Baum von dir mich hoch erfreut!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid will mich was lehren:
Die Hoffnung und Beständigkeit
Gibt Mut und Kraft zu jeder Zeit!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid will mich was lehren.

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!
Your boughs are green in summer's clime
And through the snows of wintertime.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me?
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me?
When off at joyous Christmastime
Your form inspires my song and rhyme.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me ?

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson.
That constant faith and hope sublime
Lend strength and comfort through all time.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson .

Coniferous Links

Excellent mini-summary:
<http://www.british-trees.com/guide/scotspine.htm>
Scots Pine:
<http://www.silvabook.com/contents/ch6p176.html>
Also simple:
<http://www.british-trees.com/guide/yew.htm>
Excellent Yew article:
<http://www.indigogroup.co.uk/edge/oldyews.htm>
Juniper:
<http://www.british-trees.com/guide/juniper.htm>
Detailed ecology of ancient Caledonian forest:
<http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/tfl.scpine.html>
<http://www.angelfire.com/fl3/wicca1132/celtictree.html>
Modern Christmas tree origins:
<http://www.christmas-tree.com/where.html>
Washington Christmas trees since the 60s:
<http://www.apollonius.net/christmastrees.html>
Same Washington trees since the 20s:
<http://www.nps.gov/whho/pageant/national%5Fchristmas%5Ftree%5Fphotogra.htm>
Very good site for choosing the species of Christmas tree:
<http://ceinfo.unh.edu/Common/Documents/whichtre.htm>
What is a pine tree?
<http://www.icogitate.com/~tree/conifer.ac24.htm>
California Pines:
<http://www.icogitate.com/~tree/pining.ac22.htm>
Know your conifers:
http://dnr.state.il.us/entice/woodlands/knowyourconifers_3to5.htm



Druidical Diet Decision Dilemma Discourse

By Mike Scharding, Digitalis Grove

After reading Eric's article (see A Druid Missal-Any Samhain 2002), I felt inspired to write about my only eating decisions. There are no precedents in the RDNA regarding vegetarianism, so it seems to be a personal choice. Of course, I will try to offer a balanced view, from my own perspective. The choice(s) by the esteemed reader (in either direction) may be made easier by a familiarity with all the issues involved.

There seems to have been little doubt that the ancient Celts enjoyed meat, eggs, honey and dairy products. Examination of ancient trash dumps near ancient villages has shown a healthy multitude of bones, shells, and clay hives. Feasts, at least for the elite, were the highlight of year, and many a ferocious competition ensued for the choicest part of a deer. The Celtic descendents still love them, perhaps too much for their own good. Certainly harvest conditions may have hindered choice of farmed animal products, but hunting and fishing in communal lands continued well into the 19th century. Crofting, as mentioned before, still provides food and income for many tens of thousands in Celtic lands; enjoying a close link with the creatures that would become dinner.

After numerous fitful attempts at vegetarianism at Carleton, I eventually cut out mammalian meat during my stay in Japan, three years ago, but continue to eat poultry, fish and reptilian dishes (I call it a dinosaur diet). While Japan is changing to a more Western meat-based approach in meals, you can still get balanced meals, especially if you permit seafood in your diet, as I have chosen. I don't think about it too much anymore, except for considering the "next-step," removing my beloved cheese and milk, and substituting soy products.

There are, in fact, several forms nowadays; ranging on the "carnivorous-vegetarian" spectrum, that have increasingly filled the gap between extremes. The educated mind is said to understand two opposing viewpoints, and come up with a third. Most Druids naturally gravitate towards a moderate choice in the middle.

- **Carnivorous:** The Eskimos are the most well-known group to have lived almost wholly on animals and partly digested sea-plants from their digestive tracts. They also enjoy remarkable good health, due to the prevalence of fish, with the occasional sea-mammal.
- **Carnivorous When Possible:** this is the average American/Celtic diet dream of having three servings (or more) of animal meat and a few servings of dairy products. It is a hefty protein diet, providing about 40% to 50% of the calories.

- **Religiously Qualified Omnivores:** certain faiths forbid certain animals for "purity" reasons or "taboos" (e.g. horses, dogs, and cats are taboo in America), but these are not always followed in practice. Hindus avoid eating cows out of respect, and their economic importance to the non-mechanized farming economy. Buddhists generally advocate different degrees of vegetarianism for reasons of respect to reincarnated ancestors and living beings. Catholics generally avoid meat (but not fish) during Lent. Certain monastic orders (Trappists) are vegetarian mostly for ascetic reasons. Seventh Day Adventists, many Hindus, and Jainists (who also avoid red vegetables) also avoid meat.
- **Pollovegetarian:** eats poultry and not other types of meat.
- **Pescatarians:** Vegetables and non-mammalian seafood.
- **Lacto-ovo vegetarian:** eats dairy and egg products; no meat.
- **Ovo vegetarian:** eats eggs, no meat.
- **Lacto vegetarian:** eats dairy products; no eggs or meat
- **Vegans:** Only plants and perhaps fungi. No meat, leather, milk (except Mother 's milk), honey, feathers, lard.
- **Fruitarians:** Only eat the "expendable" portions of plants; seeds, flowers, fruits. The main plant should survive unharmed during the harvest procedure.
- **Breatharianism:** Believe it or not, there are some groups that believe that eating food actually poisons the body, and that clean air and sunlight are all we need. A few dozen have died trying to follow this diet, but the leaders complain that perhaps polluted air and lack of spiritual exercises were at fault.



From my conversations with Druids over the years, I've deduced the following top ten reasons why people continue to eat meat.

1. **Never Thought About it Much.** This is also known as the "disassociation" or "culture" reason. My family, friends and co-workers always incorporated animal products, and now it is second nature to me. Society has made the choice, and I follow their guidance. These people have not, in fact, made a conscious choice either way. One elementary class, when asked to draw a salmon, invariably drew a nice "D" shaped pink slice of meat, rather than a living creature.
2. **Taste and Texture.** In the gourmet's rainbow of flavors and chewability, nothing matches a nice succulent piece of meat. There is a reluctance to give up the variety of their palette (palate?) in artistic terms, regardless of the vast unexplored territory of vegetable options; they enjoy what they have already discovered in the meat realm.
3. **Health Reasons.** Without animal protein, I'd become skinny, decrepit, and waste away to nothing. Most plants can't provide certain key minerals and vitamins that our body can't make. Besides, even if vegetarians live longer, life is about choosing what you like.

4. **Simplicity.** Nothing is simpler than sticking a piece of roasted meat between two breads or on a plate. Saves time and fills you up. It also feels "good".
5. **Intelligence.** The strong and smart will eat the weak and stupid. Of course, this argument doesn't go well; when a camper gets eaten by a bear, we want revenge! "Animals don't feel like us" and "animals can't vote" fits in here.
6. **Divine.** The Monotheistic God gave us dominion over the Earth. We can choose to eat them with no fear of angering God.
7. **Economics.** Supporting the jobs of ranchers and livelihood of traditional pastoralists.
8. **Hunting.** I feel at one when I shoot one. Hunters carry on traditions, provide conservation volunteers and finance many ecological projects.
9. **Life Force.** This is rarely brought up, but it runs instinctively, "You are what you eat." By eating certain animals, people believe they absorb their spirit or "energy" and gain positive characteristics. This is found in Chinese medicines, Native American hunting practices, and American football players eating steak to increase their bullish nature. I had a lot of trouble with this argument in Japan, where they "welcome" the spirit to join with them by saying "itadakimasu" ("I will receive") not to the chef, but to the meal. I always argued that the animal rarely ever wanted to do this before they died. Perhaps after dying, they change their minds?
10. **"I'm not prejudiced, I eat everything."** My wife proffers this one, driving me crazy. By "excusing" any one species (except Homo Sapiens), you are being unfair to all the others. She argues that plants have spirit(s) too, and we have to eat something, so accept whatever fate brings to you, animal or plant. We live on a pyramid of death, and should humbly accept this. Even cows inadvertently eat bugs in the grass, or squash a frog. That's life (and death), get used to it.



There are, of course, several counter-arguments, on behalf of the Vegetarians;

1. **Compassion.** Like many animal-rightists, vegetarians often consider animals to have feelings similar or equal to our own in sensitivity, especially in self-preservation, comfort, pain, and family ties.
2. **Method.** Centers around the painful cramped nature of mass-farms (idyllic family farms are almost extinct), lack of stimulation, movement, painful and frightened deaths. This encompasses a huge range of stomach-turning descriptions. To me, this still leaves open the possibility of accepting meat from an animal that receives a peaceful anesthetized death, on a big rolling farm after many years of productive live experiences. Douglas Adam's futuristic vision of a cow that is bred to desire being eaten, and which can eloquently explain this to the diner, comes to mind.
3. **Health Reasons.** Cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, obesity, transmitted diseases (both sanitary and parasitical) and pesticide/antibiotics/hormones should dissuade us, especially in semi-raw products. Meat eating people are especially stinky. Oddly enough, those countries noted for their high protein

consumption have the worst rate of osteoporosis in the world, while the disease is almost unheard of in the poorer nations that cannot afford meat or drink milk.

4. **Diversity.** Heavy reliance, or preference for meat, blinds us to the dazzling variety of protein and calcium substitutes. The five vegetables that Americans eat most are French fries, tomatoes (mostly as sauce or ketchup), onions, iceberg lettuce, and other potatoes; that's not my idea of fruits and vegetables--that's garnish on burgers." Did somebody say "vitamin supplements?"
5. **Intelligence.** If animals have some ability to react to their environment at all (i.e. "think") we should respect it, no matter how rudimentary; and choose food sources that don't injure their life spans. This is found most prominently in the protection of robustly intelligent critters like whales, monkeys, dogs and lawyers.
6. **Divine.** As mentioned before, many specific animals are revered by certain religions.
7. **Environment/Economics.** Revolves around the fact that by going through an intermediate step (the animal) 90% of plant proteins and carbohydrates and huge amounts of scarce water are "lost" that could have grown food for hungry people. Many forests and marshes are destroyed to make pasturage for cattle/sheep/crops, not to mention methane. Animal protein naturally is more expensive than vegetable protein, except in very unusual regions of the world.

One acre of land (two acres equals one hectare):

- a) Can produce enough feed for about 50 pounds of animal protein with only 15% of that available for human consumption.
- b) Can feed 20 vegans or 1 meat eater.
- c) Can produce enough soybeans to yield about 500 pounds of protein.
- d) Can produce enough wheat to meet the protein requirements for one person for 877 days, whereas soybeans would produce enough protein for 2,224 days.
- e) Can produce enough food to feed 4 vegans.
- f) Can produce (in pounds): potatoes (40,000), onions (40,000), carrots (30,000), tomatoes (50,000), celery (60,000), beef (250).
- g) Requires (in gallons of water): tomatoes (23), lettuce (23), potatoes (24), wheat (25), carrots (33), apples (49), eggs (544), chickens (815), pork (1630), beef (5214).

8. **Friendship.** It is said that it is easier to approach animals if you're a vegetarian, because either you smell safe or emit friendly vibes. On hunting trips, take pictures not pelts.

9. **Life Force.** According to some, similar to intelligence, eating an unwilling victim (carrion is okay?) might result in unfriendly spirits joining your collective spirit, and giving you "spiritual indigestion." Many religions advocate restricting meat before religious festivals. One case of the Tarbh Feis in Ireland, actually had the visionary gorge on beef and wrapped in a fresh hide to predict the future of a king. There is also an infamous Irish King rite of eating a whole mare (after making love to it).

10. **Prejudice/Social Reasons.** As below so above. Basically, by incarcerating animals, denying their rights, separating familial creatures, and eating them, it shows a predilection and unconscious support for racial, class, and gender prejudice.

To me, both arguments can range into the moral high ground and practicality. I don't expect you to change your diet or follow my own choices, but I hope I've opened up a new area of your life to examination and contemplation.

Dietary Links

What did cavemen eat?

[http://weightloss.about.com/cs/cavemandiet/Religion and Diet](http://weightloss.about.com/cs/cavemandiet/Religion%20and%20Diet) <http://www.torchlight.com/diet.html>

Friendly vegetarian introduction:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/vegetarianism.html

Studios overview (but not shocking) similar to my article, but in more detail:

<http://www.innvista.com/health/diet/vintro.htm>

Although slightly biased towards animal rights, a nice 10 reasons for and against animal rights is presented. Outlining the major arguments on both sides. Expressed in a very cordial and reasoned way:

<http://www.cultureandanimals.org/animalrights.htm>

Jewish Kosher Primer:

<http://www.ou.org/kosher/primer.html>

Muslim Halaal Primer:

<http://www.muslimfoodguide.co.uk/index1.html>

Jain Food Primer:

<http://www.jainworld.com/society/jainfood/jainfood.htm>

Why Hindus don't like McDonalds?

<http://www.indiavine.com/hinduism-cows1.htm>

Religions and Vegetarianism (dozens of essays):

<http://www.ivu.org/religion/>

Another multi-faith examination of vegetarian ethics:

<http://www.compassionatespirit.com/index.htm>

Philosophical utility argument against fishing :

<http://www.utilitarian.org/animals/veggie.html>

Miscellany



The Barbarians of Ancient Europe Conference

Dear Fellow Celts,

The University of Richmond's Department of Classical Studies is hosting a conference on "The Barbarians of Ancient Europe," March 21-23, 2003. The conference will be hosted by Larissa Bonfante, Visiting Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Richmond for the second semester of this academic year. Please visit our web site to review the program, the speakers, and how to register:

<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/as/classics/Barbarians/home.html>

If you have further inquiries, please e-mail me at wheeler@richmond.edu. We cordially invite you to be a part of this important conference.

Stuart Wheeler

Tentative Program:

Session I. Friday, March 21, 2003, 7:00-10:00 PM, The University of Richmond, Jepson Hall 118

Larissa Bonfante Welcome
Paul Keyser Ancient Geography of the Barbarian
Nancy de Grummond Myth on the Fringe: The Case of the Talking Head
Reception

Session II. Saturday, March 22, 2003. 9:00 AM-12:00 PM, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

June Aprille, Provost Welcome
University of Richmond
Larissa Bonfante Introduction
Renate Rolle The Scythians
Askold Ivantchik Herodotus and the Scythians
Ivan Marazov The Thracians
Discussion

Session II. Saturday, March 22, 2003. 2:00-5:00 PM, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Barry Cunliffe The Celts
Peter Wells The Germans
Larissa Bonfante The Etruscans
Otto Herman Frey Situla Art
Discussion

Conference Feature. Saturday, March 22, 2003. 6:30-8:15 PM, The Omni Richmond Hotel

Reception
Norma Goldman Barbarian Fashion Show
Designer

Session III, Sunday, March 23, 2003. 9:30 AM-12:30 PM, The Omni Richmond Hotel

Panel Discussion
Ann Farkas Barbarism and Barbarians
Guenter Kopke Observations on Hellenisms
John Marincola Romans as Barbarians
Walt Stevenson The Later Barbarians
Discussion
Barry Cunliffe Final Words
Buffet Lunch

Calendar

Yule, Winter Solstice, Midwinter, when the Sun enters Capricorn, will occur on December 21, 2002 at 5:51 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. At the Winter Solstice the Sun rises to the most southeast and sets to the most southwest of the entire year.

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