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Lughnasadh, is known in Modern Irish as La Lunasa, in Welsh as Gwyl Awst, (August Feast), as Lla Lluanys or Laa 'n Ouyr (day of the Harvest Season) in Manx and as Lammas, Apple Day and Harvest Home in English. It is the anniversary of the funeral games given by Lugh, the God of All Crafts, in honor of his Father. Essentially a harvest festival, this signals the beginning of the harvest season and the ripening of the apples. This holiday is a day of mixed joy and woe (Irish wakes in the old tradition) for it is now obvious that the days are getting shorter. Stories of the battles between Lugh and Balor (the good Sun-Fire God and the bad one) are retold, as the autumn quarter of "Foghamhar" begins."

A much cited but little understood goddess of the Celtic pantheon is Rosmearta, consort of one of the Mercury-like gods, though which one is not certain. It was probably not Lugh himself, whose story and exploits are fairly well known, at least in Irish tradition. She may have been associated with the Gaulish or Welsh Lugh, according to a piece of information from one of our Grove members, but there is no reference for it in any pre-medieval source we can find. His Gaulish name, Lugus, was known to the Romans, but it is not mentioned in connection with Rosmearta. Lugh's wife is Eriu or Erin in the Irish literature. In any case, she seems to have functioned independently of her consort, judged by the number of her references, shrines and place names that have survived. Her name is found in twenty-one different inscriptions, in Roman letters, on monuments in Gaul, dating from the first few centuries A.D. Caesar, Lucan, and later Latin chroniclers tell us that she was very popular, receiving much worship and tribute from the native Gauls.

One derivation of her name, (Branston, L.G. of E.) spring from the Celtic roots:

Ro = much, exceedingly
Smeart = smear, anoint

Branston cites the use of the term, smearta, in an early Cuchulain tale, in which the Irish hero smears with blood a false beard which he has made for himself from grasses. Besmearing his face, he effects a disguise. This fits with the Roman report of her popularity if she was "The much Anointed One." Celtic deity's statues and artifact were often anointed with precious oils, or with the blood of vanquished enemies when that deity was beseeched for favors or thanked for victories. There is a sanctuary, on the Boyne in Ireland, called Rosmaree, which may be that of her Irish cognate. It is a high mound, of Bronze Age origin, and Medieval Legend tells of a speaking stone connected with it which gave answers to questions about all past deeds and events. It was appealed to in order to settle disputes or establish guilt, much to the despair of the Christian monks, who recorded the custom. Local folklore has it that even up to a century or so ago, no one passed by the stone, whose name is Druin Toreime, without dismounting and paying her homage. It was seen, apparently, as a female being.

This idea of giving answers and of knowing the past, of the actions of all mortals, adds credence to the second derivation of her name, Rosmearta, from the Indo-European root Smer, to think, to remember, to share or portion out.

Ro = much
Smer = remembering, allotting
Ta = from ti, tia, female, she
The All Remembering One
The Apportioner

Her other attributes, her associations with vegetation, grain and Earth-bounty, which she meets out are consistent with the allotting function. She shares this function with another set of supernatural beings whose names derive from the same I.E. root, Smer. These are the Early Greek Moira, and the Germanic Norns, especially the middle Norn, Verthandi. In Greek her title is Lachesis, from lot, distribution, share. A more distant connection can be made to the Italic Parcae, also originally goddesses of vegetation, fertility and birth. But these three powers act differently in the Northern countries than they did among the Indo-Europeans of the Mediterranean. The Norns, Wyrð, and their cognates have none of the feeling of foreknowledge and predestination about them that characterize the Classic Fates. For Homer, the Fates' decision was unavoidable, even if one had foreknowledge and will. The Norn do not control the future. They set out one's circumstances, one's lot, and then record human action as present evolves into past. They do not control our action, but only mark them down, layer by layer, weaving the present into the past.

All these deities have in common the ancient link to vegetation and to the allotment of each person's share in life, but in Celtic and Norse they are not concerned with the future, nor do they have the power and feeling of predestiny this implies. This concept, which in later Hellenic times attached itself to the Fates (and by way of

Classic trained scholars to King Arthur's Merddyn), entered Europe with Christianity, there to cause numerous philosophical problems which hardly ended with Calvin. The Indo-European apportioning goddesses give only talents and setting. Greatness, as the poems of Cuchulain and Beowulf, and the Ossianic Fennians make clear, depends on what each person does with their portion. Rosmearta seems to have been a goddess who was thanked for success, harvest and victory.

Rosmearta can be beseeched with incense and aromatic oils to give us the circumstances in which we can be successful. (Blood is not to the modern aesthetic, unless you're a hunter or a beef rancher.) Of course, we must know what these circumstances would be if we're to ask for them and to recognize them when they occur. She can be thanked on Lughnasadh, along with Lugh and Danu, the Earth Mother, for the harvest that now begins, for our share.

By Emmon Bodfish, reprinted from A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 1984



News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



Awen Grove: News from Calgary, Canada

It has been a slow year for Awen Grove as hubby and I were busy with our move out of town and getting the house all set up.

We are looking to start holding group rituals and such again with a large get together on July 29 for Lughnassadh. We have quite a large deck out back and plan on celebrating Lughnassadh with a barbecue and a lot of fun with friends from Calgary and all over Alberta!

Wishing everyone a blessed and bountiful Lughnassadh season!

Athelia Nihtscada /\



Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.

The D.C. Grove met in a beautiful garden nestled in the Smithsonian neighborhood, flanked by two large stone "sigils" and a Celtic-cross pool, enjoying the shade and cooling our heels. Brother Azeem and I caught up on his studies of Sufism and the mysteries of ballroom dance, and I told of my studies of Theravada Buddhism of Cambodia (a country near to my assigned post in Laos next March). I noted the movie, *LADY IN THE WATER*, by the talented director, M. Night Shyamalan ("The Sixth Sense" and "The Village") is out this month, and I intend to watch it.

We discussed mostly the reasons for vocation of Druidic service and the necessity of taking vacation breaks to avoid burn-out. The decision to undertake an Archdruidcy is difficult and full of responsibilities, and takes

up much time that could be spent elsewhere. After I leave, another grove may emerge in the DC area under his tutelage perhaps, but the future is hard to read. There are many promising avenues ahead of that young Druid and I wish him well on whichever course he pursues. A Druid might wish to write, dance, read, travel; and these are all good things.

Azeem gave me a copy of TOGARE RABINDRANATH's collection of Hindu 20th century nature poetry which is proving a delight to me. No sooner had I sat down to delve its depths after we parted, then the postal worker rang my door bell, and I received Brother Isaac Bonewits' advance final printed copy of Bonewits Essential Guide to Druidism. I didn't know which to read for a moment! As you know I had worked with Isaac on his rough draft, and so I was eager to see the result. I've written a full book review later in this issue of the Missal-Any.

I've also been deeply stimulated by the arguments in April/May about whether the RDNA is "Druidic" enough to deserve the term. I'm currently working with Azeem on some "Druidic Apology" letters to discuss our possible responses to such statements. A good sign is that I had trouble sleeping due to the number of words clamoring to be written down. Hopefully by the Fall Equinox something worth reading will be ready.

Mike the FoOI



Dogwood Proto-Grove: News from Virginia

Dogwood Protogrove has to announce that one of our members has been notified that he is being sent to Iraq. This is a poignant time because he became a father to a healthy baby boy the beginning of June. Please keep him in your prayers and devotions.

Our grove has no Lughnasadh plans currently.



Dravidia Proto-Grove: News from Indiana

Hello all,

I know it has been a while, kinda hectic, but here we go.

The grove prospers, and we are all ready Lughnasadh. I have taken a more detailed study of the plant life this Summer. The variations of different plants, and their properties. Have added quite a new volume on my flora and fauna area. All else is well.



Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News From Minnesota

Seasonal Salutations Siblings!

Here's hoping that the summer is bringing all of you the brightest of spirits, and the best of health.

Lou and I? We've been dumping buckets of ice down our shorts.

It's been a scorcher in Minnesota. And Lou...poor Lou...I swear he is the whitest chamookamon on the face

of the planet. We joke because he actually has a slightly darker complexion than I do...but he's also a whole lot whiter than I am. We spent all day yesterday at a Dakota Wacipi pow wow...I didn't advertise the fact that I'm Ojibwe. Lou forgot to bring his sunscreen. I never wear the stuff. I don't need it. He got fried...I mean probably-going-to-blister type of frying. Me? Not even a bit of pink. He spends five minutes outside, and he needs to be basted. I can spend all day outside, and nothing happens. All that latent melanin, I guess.

He's also a candidate for getting a vented head...but that's another story.

Let's see...activities this summer. Camping...camping... amping...kayaking... camping...cleaning cat boxes...OOOH! Did I tell you I can get an entire pound of bacon on my new cast iron discada? Which of course, leads me to my next bit of news...Lou and I are now dieting. I've been supplementing with Hoodia Gordonii and a carb blocker. The hoodia...so long as you buy the real deal stuff (contact me personally if you have questions about it) really is all it's cracked up to be...I'm very impressed. The trick is buying the RIGHT stuff...there are tons of imposters out there. (again, contact me with questions) The carb blocker has some interesting side effects, though If you wonder what undigested carbohydrates in your lower intestinal tract does...it...well...we have some mighty well fluffed shorts around here. And has inspired the latest oft-used line in the house..."OOOOH! You put STINKY up my nose!"

I finally purchased a hornet / wasp trap. With our gardens, and the new addition of our ponds, the bee population in the yard has gotten out of control. For those of you who remember, I have a lethal allergic reaction to bee stings if I don't get to my epinephrine injections in time. (Some of you may remember the butt-naked bee sting incident from 2004. Those poor paramedics. Of course, four buff ripped men bursting into my house would NEVER happen when I'm healthy...oh heavens, no. It's when I'm butt-naked, unconscious, convulsing, vomiting, tweaked out, swollen up like an overstuffed canoli, and flopping around like a fish on my living room floor. Apparently the goddess likes me to fully appreciate "humility"). For those of you with similar afflictions, I've found the best bait for said traps is a pre-sweetened Kool-Aid (but make it really syrupy), and then add a few pieces of raw meat or cat/dog food. The bees are attracted to the sugar and the protein. The trap I bought said to use a fruit juice, but we've had much better luck since we switched to pre-sweetened Kool-Aid.

Lou and I also got to Wisconsin for the Buell motorcycle homecoming (it's the Sturgis for Buell motorcycles). Biker schleps that we are. We camped along the shores of Lake Winnebago (in between Green Bay and Milwaukee...that huge lake you see on the map....no not Lake Michigan...the smaller huge lake just west of that one.) Lake Winnebago was very important to the local Indians hundreds of years ago. They left behind several burial mounds that I went and paid my respects at. I don't get many opportunities to pray in Ojibwe, and I take them when and where I can. I can see why the ancients picked that place as a burial place....overlooking Lake Winnebago. It's a good place to be an Indian.

Until the next installment, Siblings, I hope the Mother blesses all of you with bounties of umbrella drinks and air conditioning.

Gigawabamin nagutch, and yours in the Mother,

-Julie Ann and Lou

Cat-in-the-Corner Hermitage (Grove): News from Colorado



Cat-in-the-Corner Grove is now Cat-in-the-Corner Hermitage. Groves pass through seasons, too...just not always following the liturgical or planetary calendar. And while Hermitage for the purposes of spiritual reflection and growth may or may not be a Druidical Tradition, it is a time-honored Celtic one.

Most of my energy for the past year plus was directed towards my mother, who was terminally ill with cardiac amyloidosis (a very nasty disease indeed). She passed peacefully on April 5. Since then my brother and I have been engaged in all the physical, legal, and emotional wrap-up duties necessary when one's parent passes.



Clan of the Triplehorses: News from Oregon

Clan of the Triple Horses Grove is co-sponsoring a mini-festival campout on Fall Equinox/Mabon weekend, Sept. 22-24, at Humboldt Redwoods State Park in Weott California at the Avenue of the Giants. This will be open to all Druids and fellow Pagans. We hope to meet many other RDNA Druids that we've only been in touch with online. We are even expecting some Druids from the East Coast to attend, so it is not just limited to our geographical area!

We picked this forest setting because of the awesome energy and beauty of these amazing trees. The campsite is set apart from the rest, so it is private, and there is access to the south fork of the Eel river for those interested in swimming (or skinny dipping)...

Activities include a bardic circle for poetry and storytelling, various workshops, music and drum circle, shared feasting, and two informal rituals along with a formal New Moon ritual with procession. There will also be private time for hiking, vision quests, and general communing with Nature, etc.

For more information and/or if you would like to teach a workshop, please contact me at: aigeann@earthlink.net

For more information about Clan of the Triple Horses, please see <http://home.earthlink.net/~triplehorses/>



Nemeton Awenyddion: News from Cohasset, CA

Fall Harvest comes late here at 4,000 ft. elevation which is nice as it gives my daughter and I more time to horse around. We've been very busy working off our hands and building a 45 ft. ring corral to play the communication horse games with our three equine friends. I chose for it to be built in alignment to the east direction of the stone ring to run that energy together--like a bar bell.

I have been out of touch with people over this last year and have strictly been focusing on equine communication and psychology in retraining abused or neglected horses. We have come far over this last year. I have shared space in the stone ring with our Shetland pony "Snickers" who loved walking the ring and sniffing all of the stones. I found our communication was clearer in the stone ring.

My family will be having an Autumn horse ride probably out to Deer Creek to camp this Fall. Not sure if it will be on Lunassadh but that is what we are aiming for. Deer Creek, by the way, was the home of the Ishi clan (the word "tribe" is an insult) there is much to see there and along the way there are several 150 ft. natural basalt standing stones standing north to south. I have always wanted to find the place of meditation at

Deer Creek where the water doesn't move. This place was known to the Ishi.

Rhiannon Fugatt
Nemeton Awenyddion
Cohasset/Chico, Calif.



Sierra Madrone Grove: News from California

We at the Sierra Madrone Grove had a terrific Summer Solstice. Arch-Druid Stephen Abbott joined us for a wonderful celebration along the Sacramento River. We had a nice gathering of about 20 people, and it was hot. But it was fun, we had a nice BBQ and libations afterward.

On July 22nd, our Grove will be holding a colloquy a Gathering of the Druids. We will sit, discuss, and debate all things druid. We will have our normal potluck and libations.

On August 10 thru 13, we will hold the 3rd Annual Sierra Madrone Grove Lughnasadh Campout This is our yearly event that treks us up to the Sierra Nevada Mountains to worship the Sun God.

All's Well Here!

Sean mac Dhomhnuill
Senior Druid



Duir De Danu Grove: News from California

I like to mark Lughnasadh by baking some sort of bread in the shape of Lugh, the Bright One, the Many-Crafted One. I make sure that there is a piece of dough in the shape of a phallus in the proper place. That is the High Priestess's portion. It dates back to the coven I formed with another woman. So far the most popular kind of bread I have baked in this way has been gingerbread. This is when you bring out the spray cans of whipped cream and start shooting it at each other. Tegwedd ShadowDancer



Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

It's been a season of creatures. There are two bucks that have been hanging out together, both still in velvet. I had thought male deer tried to remain scarce and were solitary but it seems when they are in velvet they keep each other's company perhaps for protection. One is young, maybe a year or two old with a rich brown coat. The other is larger, more gray in color, and appears to be sickly. His tail is much smaller and his antlers are deformed with one just a stub. They nibble on the ivy, poison oak, blackberry shoots, and lunaria, and sleep under the front deck. We've been talking to them when we see them so they will get used to us and know this place is a safe haven for them. I think it's working because they have defecated within 20 feet of us with no fear that we will go after them when in this "compromised" position.

It's the time of year when mother raccoon has had her babies and needs to feed them in addition to herself.

Unfortunately anything is fair game including the neighbors' chickens. Despite every effort to fortify the chicken coop and hutch the raccoons have managed to get in and kill two of them. Maybe it would be so bad if we hadn't gotten to know the chickens, learned their names, and come to see them not just as food producers but as friends. We have a reciprocal relationship. We receive their eggs and they are the beneficiaries of our vegetable and fruit scraps. But this is Nature. I can't very well call Her cruel for that would be putting a human judgment upon Her. To quote the Dharma talk given by a Zen Buddhist monk at the Shasta Abbey, "It just is." And that I will have to be satisfied with.



Memories of Lughnasads Past

By Daibhi O'Broder
Craftsman Druid

A story and a poem mayhap...

Many years ago I was privileged to share in a Lughnasad service which I will long remember. It began with the morning services a calling of the morning by my sin-sean?hair, he was 98 then, but as strong and vital as a man of 30. He was an Irish farmer immigrant who planted a field by their humble house here in the South. On the morning of Lughnasad we would gather there, the whole of the family and friends while gram would sit by and watch for the moment as papa would sing a song to morning over the field which lay well tended. His fine voice rose in the cracked cadence of those in their years but with a firmness that belied age.

Creator of the earth and sky,
ruling the firmament on high,
clothing the day with robes of light,
blessing with gracious sleep the night.

Lugh in your brightest raiment bid,
And bless this day too long lay hid,
With heart, and harp we lift our voice,
Your pleasure on us we rejoice.

Papa was a Irish Catholic by birth but as much Pagan as any Irish by his heart. Hay bales were lain as always during these festive times, while my brother and cousins would lift the barn doors from their hinges and bring out to lay across them forming rough tables. Then the great feast would be laid on, boxty, tatties, bannocks, and scones bumped side by with all sorts of other vegetables and breads. Then in the midst there would be a pit that had been made three days prior with coals hot and a pig, sheep, or maybe half of a cow roasting. My great uncle Michael would play the pipes while papa would sit by and join with his fiddle. Then in the midst of the feast gram would go to the wash pot and lever out with the help of my mum, grandmother, and aunt a length of freshly woven woolen cloth. They'd take that to the kitchen table that was set up in the yard as well and all would gather about for the waulking of the wool. Papa would chant the prayer of waulking and then with music they would begin the ancient art of fulling the wool that is called waulking.

The day would end with all of us by the fields facing west and papa, grandda, and my da singing the "The Rune of the Evening." Usually by this time all of us younger ones would already be asleep on pallets laid down in the living room by gram. But there were some of us still awake to hear their steady voices praising Lugh, Bride, Aine, Angus Og, Nuada, all. Those were the golden years which we, my garran are attempting to reclaim.

And now my contribution:

Oh Lugh of light, our shining Lord
Who in the sky lights with sword,
As on you ride through day bright sheen,
We give you thanks, our hearts to mend.

Preserve us Bride, Aine, all
Before our fathers let us stand tall,
Guard therefore this land we hold
In trust for you we claim this bold.
Your wisdom let us ne'er forget
Your mercy let us embrace forever.



An Introduction to Modern Druid Groups

By Susan Reed

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Section Five: Membership and Training

So, how does one become a member and what can members hope to learn in each of these organizations? I will cover first membership and any training offered.

OBOD (1)

Membership

One becomes a member by taking the Bardic Grade course. This has a flat fee (approximately US\$400, which covers printing and mailing of a considerable amount of material); several people may share the course for a nominal additional fee (approximately \$30 per additional person). Once you have started the course, you are a member of OBOD for life.



Initiation into each grade is available and encouraged, but not required. OBOD regards "initiation" as a beginning and when people commence any of the grade courses, they are sent a solitary initiation ritual which they encouraged to perform at the beginning of their studies, but may do the ritual at any time during their studies or not at all. Whether they perform the ritual or not, they are still considered by the Order to be initiates of that grade.

Individual groves/seed groups decide if membership is required for ritual or meeting participation. Non-members may attend OBOD camps accompanied by members/officers or if invited.

Training

OBOD has three grades: Bards, Ovates and Druids. Each grade is taught by correspondence course and through interaction with a tutor that is assigned to members. To advance to the next grade, a member must present a review of the course to his or her tutor who assesses the member's readiness to move to the next grade. Each grade theoretically takes one year to complete, but personally, I think if you can finish a grade in one year, you have lots of time on your hands. Most people take several years to complete a grade.

The Bardic grade introduces the member to basic skills and traditions used in OBOD druidry, such as seasonal rituals, creation of ritual space, interaction with the four elements, basic meditation techniques, self-assessment and self-analysis through interacting with the myth of the Gwion Bach's transformation into Taliesin. It also fosters developing creativity and contact with awen and encourages the member to share his or her talents to the community.



An initiate into the Ovate grade works with developing seership through work on the healing and divinatory skills of the Druids. A study of sacred sites and trees, animals and plants is also conducted.

The Druid grade initiate works with deepening his or her understanding and experience of Druid philosophy and magical practice with an emphasis on service to the tradition. This grade's work includes multi-layered exploration of Arthurian and Grail myths.

BDO

Anyone may join BDO by sending in an application form found on its web site. A voluntary donation is requested, but no fee is required.



Membership is not required to attend Gorseddau and other BDO-sponsored activities, but members may be given priority when space is limited.

The Order recognizes the three traditional areas of Druidic practice, those of Bard, Ovate and Druid, but does not normally offer initiation into any of these areas. The BDO offers guidance to help people find their own sources of inspiration and seeks to pass on its tradition through hands-on teaching and direct personal experience. BDO seems to do its training through Gorseddau, camps, talks, workshops, nature walks and other types of experiential gatherings and through informal master-apprenticeship or mentor/protégé relationships. (2)

AODA

Membership

In the Ancient Order of Druids in America, commencing training and membership is synonymous. Self-initiation as a candidate is an integral part of membership.



Membership is fee-based. There is a life-time membership fee for initial enrollment and for each degree. The lifetime membership fee for enrollment to the status of "Candidate" is US\$50. For the First Degree (Druid Apprentice), the fee is US\$100, for the Second Degree (Druid Companion), US\$100, and for the Third Degree (Druid Adept), US\$50. (3)

Training

The AODA web site summarizes its training program as follows: (4)

A new member starts as a candidate, undergoes the candidate initiation, and follows the first-degree

study program for at least one year. The program is more fully described at <http://www.aoda.org/about/curric1.htm> and consists of four parts done simultaneously: the Earth Path of nature awareness and service to the living Earth, the Sun Path of seasonal celebration, the Moon Path of meditation, as well as study in one of seven "spirals"— poetry, music, divination, healing, magic, sacred geometry, and Earth mysteries. At the present time, these studies are done on a self-study basis due to a lack of trained second and third degree members to mentor a candidate.

After two more years and the completion of a more extensive course of study, Druid Apprentices may apply for initiation into the degree of Druid Companion (described at <http://www.aoda.org/about/curric2.htm>). The Second Degree training consists of five Paths and three Spirals. The Earth Path comprises the disciplines of nature awareness, seasonal ritual, and meditation central to the First Degree, which are continued in the Second. The Water Path embraces the arts of spiritual guidance and instruction. The Fire Path consists of the arts of ritual design and performance. The Air Path encompasses the scholarly arts and Druid history and traditions. The Spirit Path, finally, extends into the fields of comparative religion and nature spirituality.

In addition, each aspirant must study two of the seven Spirals outlined in the First Degree curriculum , in addition to the one studied in preparation for the First Degree, and one additional art, craft, or discipline not included in the seven Spirals, gaining a basic level of competence in each of these subjects.

A minimum of three years of membership as a Druid Companion and the completion of an individually designed program of advanced Druid training and practice is normally required before a member may be proposed for the Third Degree. The Third Degree is for the Druid who wishes to go further and create a uniquely personal path as a Druid Adept. It has no fixed curriculum in the normal sense, as "each aspirant to this Degree must go beyond the ordinary and blaze a new trail through the Druid forest." Some suggested ideas are found at <http://www.aoda.org/about/curric3.htm>. [It's kind of like getting a Ph.D. — you have to come up with an original contribution.]

Members of ADF who have completed the Dedicant's Program or members of OBOD, who have completed certain grades may apply for "transfer credit." The details may be found at <http://www.aoda.org/about/transfer.htm>.

RDNA



Membership is open to all; you are member is you say you are. Membership in RDNA is not fee-based, but some groves/groups might have membership dues. There are no formal teachings.

According to [Druid Chronicles \(Reformed\)](#) [PDF 248K], Members of the "first order" become so by partaking the waters of life at a ritual and by accepting the tenets of reformed Druidism. To become a "second order," one must understand the nature of Reformed Druid ritual and tenets and pledge service to the Earth Mother. To become a third order priest or priestess, one sit a overnight outdoor vigil and know how to lead a Reformed Druid ritual. Within the RDNA there are "Higher Orders," from the Fourth to the Tenth, that are "reserved for outstanding insight and dedication over a period of time." It is unclear if any of these "Higher Orders" are still active or not. (5)

ADF

Membership

One may become a member by paying yearly dues (\$15/year).



Training

The first step in ADF's training programs is the Dedicant's Program, a year-long program that introduces members to the basics of ADF druidism. It includes such things as developing meditation skills, recommended readings, consideration of ethical and philosophical issues, etc. It includes: (6)

1. Written discussions of the dedicant's understanding of each of the nine virtues.
2. Short essays on each of the eight High Days including a discussion of the meaning of each feast.
3. Short book reviews on one Indo-European studies title, one preferred ethnic study title and one modern Paganism title.
4. Developing a home shrine and describing it in writing and with photographs and describing future plans for improving it.
5. Writing an essay on the dedicant's understanding of the "two powers" meditation or other form of grounding and centering gained through practice.
6. Weekly journal entries or an essay detailing experiences in meditation, trance or other mental discipline for at least a five month period.
7. An account of the dedicant's efforts to work with nature, honor the Earth, and understand the impact of the dedicant's lifestyle choices on the environment/local ecosystem and how she or he could make a difference to the environment on a local level.
8. A brief account of each High Day ritual attended or performed by the Dedicant during the training period, at least four of which must be in an ADF-style ritual format.
9. One essay describing the Dedicant's understanding of and relationship to each of the Three Kindreds: the Spirits of Nature, the Ancestors and the Gods.
10. A brief account of the efforts of the Dedicant to develop and explore a personal (or Grove-centered) spiritual practice, drawn from a specific culture or combination of cultures.
11. The text of the Dedicant's Oath Rite and a brief evaluation of the rite.

Completion of the Dedicant's Program is required to proceed onto other training programs such as the Generalist Study Program, various Guild study programs (Artisans, Bards, Liturgists, Scholars and Warriors Guilds), the Clergy Training Program and the Initiate's Program. Each of these have its own requirements as detailed on the ADF members' web site. (7)

Keltria

Membership

Membership is by paying yearly dues (sliding scale \$15–\$35/year). Members may vote at the annual meeting for Board of Directors members and for officers.



Initiation is not required for membership, but Keltrian Druidism is an initiatory tradition; so full training is only available to those who wish to dedicate themselves on a path towards initiation.

Training (8)

A member who wishes to pursue initiation may become a Dedicant, which involves committing him/herself to the study of Druidism and undergoing a dedication ceremony. The dedicant then commences a study course with a mentor or is involved with the training system of a Grove. During this period, dedicants may be called upon to take on lesser roles in public rituals. Initiation of a dedicant requires the approval from a member of the Ring of Oak.

The Henge of Keltria has three levels of achievement, called Rings. The three Rings are the Ring of Birch, the Ring of Yew and the Ring of Oak. The Ring of Oak has three tiers, Hawthorne, Rowan and Mistletoe. Advancement is based on time, study and service.

Upon initiation, the dedicant is admitted into the Ring of Birch, where he or she is expected to study the "required areas" and serve the Grove in a capacity commensurate with his or her station. This level is considered a student level. When a Druid of the Birch has completed the time, educational and service requirement, she or he may be advanced to the Ring of the Yew by a member of the Ring of the Yew or Oak. A member of this ring must remain there for at least 13 lunations.

Members of the Ring of the Yew are expected to continue their studies and serving in all ritual capacities. The members of this ring are considered lay clergy or "Druid deacon." A member of this ring must remain there for at least three lunar years. A Ring of Yew member must undergo clerical training and demonstrate their skills by acting as clergy and conducting rituals over a period of time. If, after lunar three years, the person has met the necessary service and training requirements, she may apply for advancement to the Ring of Oak.

A Druid of the Oak may break away from his or her mother grove and start a new grove or champion other groves. A member of this ring may also be legally ordained as ministers in the Henge of Keltria.

A new Druid of the Oak finds him or herself in the tier of hawthorne. At this point, the druid chooses one of three disciplines, Bard, Seer or Priest and focuses study in the chosen area of specialization which continuing general studies. He or she is expected to act as clergy, teach grove leadership material and mentor Ring of Yew members on preparation for the clergy. A Hawthorne tier member should also begin attending philosophical/theological round tables and debates.



After three lunar years, a Druid may be advanced to the tier of Rowan, if she or he has performed his or her service to the grove or Henge adequately and is approved by two members of the Rowan or Mistletoe tiers. As a member of the tier of the Rowan, the Druid should be acting as primary clergy, continuing studies in his or her specialty, teaching advanced courses and actively participating in theological discussions.

Three members of the tier of Mistletoe must endorse advancement of the Druid to the tier of Mistletoe. At this level, the Druid no longer needs to be actively conducting ritual, but overseeing other acting clergy. A Druid at this level is expected to devote him/herself to the service of one of the triads, either Ancestors, Nature Spirits or the Gods or to all three.

Notes to Membership & Training

1. This section is compiled from the following sources:
The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. "Join — Following the Path of Druidry" (and pages linked to this page). Accessed March 23, 2005. <http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=8&page_id=46>; The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. "Frequently Asked Questions." Accessed March 23, 2005. <http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=2&page_id=6>; Damh the Bard. "The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids." Published May 2004. Accessed July 16, 2004. <http://www.witchvox.com/trads/trad_obod.html>
2. The British Druid Order. "Introducing the BDO." n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004.

- <http://www.druidorder.demon.co.uk/bdo_intro.htm> and “Membership of the BDO.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <http://www.druidorder.demon.co.uk/bdo_membership.htm>
3. The Ancient Order of Druids in America. “Membership in the AODA.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <<http://www.aoda.org/member.htm>>
 4. The Ancient Order of Druids in America. “Frequently Asked Questions.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <<http://www.aoda.org/FAQ.htm#Howdoes>>; “AODA First Degree Curriculum.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <<http://www.aoda.org/about/curric1.htm>>; “AODA Second Degree Curriculum.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <<http://www.aoda.org/about/curric2.htm>>; and “AODA Third Degree draft curriculum.” n.d. Accessed July 16, 2004. <<http://www.aoda.org/about/curric3.htm>>
 5. The Reformed Druids of North America. *A Reformed Druid Anthology, Part One: The the Chronicles of the Foundation*. Drynemeton Press, 1996. Available in [PDF format \[284K\]](#).
 6. Sonoran Sunrise Grove. “ADF Dedicants.” Accessed February 6, 2006. <<http://www.ssg-adf.org/dedicants.htm/>>.
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 8. Henge of Keltria. *The Henge of Keltria By-Laws*. 2005 Edition. [Available online in PDF format \[147K\]](#).

Section Six: Rituals and Ritual Structures

First, I will address some ritual issues and concepts and sum up the various groups' attitudes and practices for each of these, starting with the purposes of ritual. Then I will include some more detailed information about each group including sample ritual outlines.

Purposes of Ritual

Almost all Druid groups share some of the same purposes of ritual, but give them different emphases. They all seek to change consciousness, to create awareness of the sacredness of nature, to encourage expressions of creativity, to manifest deep interconnections of all life and to mark the changing cycles of the earth.

British-based Druid rituals are more an opportunity to celebrate natural cycles, to create and enhance community and to commune with the sources of inspiration and less about veneration or worship. American-based Druid rituals emphasize honoring the Gods and the spirits of the land and the ancestors.

Deities and Other Spirits

So what is the role of Deities or other spirits in Druid rituals? Since OBOD and AODA are multi-faith groups, the Gods are not generally invoked in their established rituals. In OBOD, a generic "Spirit" or "Spirits" that may include for the participants Deity and/or the Spirit(s) of the Grove or place may be call upon. With the BDO, it seems that the Gods may not be invoked at larger gatherings that include many different paths, but may invoked for more private, intimate rituals with people who share the same Gods. The Reformed Druids are also a multi-faith group, but their rituals have traditionally invoked "Be'al" (a representation of the "Sky Father") and the "Earth Mother." Individual Reformed Druids may or may not regard them as Gods and different RDNA groups may invoke Deities as they wish. ADF and Keltrian ritual emphatically invokes the Gods and consider their rituals ways of honoring the Gods.

Spirits of the Grove or Spirits of the Land, or Nature Spirits are also invoked in almost all of the groups discussed.

BDO, ADF and Keltria also usually invite the spirits of the ancestors into their rituals. In ADF and in Keltria, these, along with the Spirits of the Land and the Gods are often known collectively as the Triad or Triad

powers.

When Gods are invoked in ADF or Keltrian ritual, only Gods from a single pantheon are called and pantheons are not mixed in the same ritual.

The Nature of Ritual Space

One of the blanket statements I often hear about druids concerns the nature of ritual space. I have often heard that "druids don't cast circles." Well, it depends on which Druid group you're talking about. Several Druids groups, especially those based on Revivalist groups or Wiccan groups, do include casting a magical circle and calling the four elements of conventional Western magic in their rituals. OBOD, BDO and AODA all do this to one degree or another. The circle may be completely closed off from the mundane world, but not always; it depends on the particular ritual. A good guide to British-based druid ritual is Emma Restall Orr's book, *Ritual: A Druid's Guide to Life, Love & Inspiration*, in which she has described the varying natures of the circle cast in ritual. In some cases, the circle seems to be more a cylinder open to the sky and to the earth. In other cases, a closed sphere or ovoid placed "between the worlds" may be created.



In contrast, ritual space in RDNA rituals seems totally open and placed within this world. People may come and go as they wish. The same is true for ADF rituals. Ritual space for the Henge of Keltria is semi-closed, considered "special," but not separated from the world. In ADF and Keltrian rituals, a portal is opened to the realms of the Triad powers, so energy may flow between the realms.

Ritual Formats

What kinds of ritual formats are found among these groups? British-originated groups tend to follow a similar ritual format that usually includes the following components: calling to the spirits of the grove/land, calling peace to the quarters, saying the universal Druids's prayer, calling or chanting the awen, casting a circle, consecrating the circle, welcoming and opening the quarters and elements, doing the main body of the ritual, making a statement of unity, thanking the quarters and unwinding the circle.

American-originated groups have formats that may include these components: opening prayers and meditations, opening the gates to the Otherworld, inviting the Gods, Spirits of the Land and the Ancestors (the Triad powers), making offerings and dedications to the Triad powers, receiving an omen, receiving blessings, sharing blessings, other workings, giving thanks to the Triad powers, closing the gates and releasing the grove. The basic ritual of RDNA includes the features of making offerings and receiving blessings.

The rituals of the American-originated groups, RDNA, ADF and Keltria emphasize sacrifice to the Gods or to the Triads and receiving blessings thereof. The rituals of BDO and OBOD emphasize receiving inspiration and honoring sacred nature.

Ritual Set-up

Do these groups have special tools or ways the ritual space is set up? For OBOD and BDO, there are no tools or ways to set up ritual space required for all rituals; tools and space set up are determined by the nature of the specific ritual. However, the metaphor of meeting within a grove of trees is usually maintained and participants usually gather in a circle or a horseshoe shape.



RDNA ritual only requires that there be "waters of life" or "waters of sleep" and a container to hold it and a sacrificial branch. ADF ritual requires a representation of a well (for example, a pan, a basin, a cauldron), of fire (such as a fire pit or fire bowl, or one or more candles, if inside), and the world tree (a pole or branch or, perhaps, an actual tree) and usually a sacrificial branch or other sacrificial items. One of the groves local to my area also has altars for the realms of land, sea and sky or for ancestors, nature spirits and Gods, depending on the cosmology used in a particular ritual.

Both Keltrian ritual and AODA ritual are much more elaborate. Both use an array of ritual tools and items, set up in a particular way -you have more about this in your handout.

Western Magical Tradition Influence

A few of the "blanket statements" I've heard about Druid practices center around the acceptance or rejection of Western Magical Tradition within Druidry. Western Magical Tradition includes some remnants of ancient magical practices shaped and reinterpreted through various strands of mysticism, including Judeo-Christian mysticism. Some Druid groups incorporate elements of the Western Magical Tradition, while others have consciously rejected the tradition.

AODA is especially influenced by Western Magical Tradition within its prescribed rituals. A protective circle is cast, creating a place between the worlds, negative influences are banished and the traditional four elements are called into the circle. In older OBOD rituals, the influence of Western Magical tradition is strong as well, though newer OBOD rituals are more influenced by Reconstructionist ideas and show hybridization between the two trends. BDO rituals, as exemplified by Orr and Shallcrass, also show hybridization between Reconstructionist ideas and by Western Magical Tradition.

On the other hand, RDNA, ADF and Keltrian ritual show little influence by Western Magical Tradition and, in the case of ADF, a conscious effort to reject Western Magical Tradition seems to have been made. The basic RDNA ritual was derived from Episcopalian liturgy. ADF and Keltrian ritual works with the concept of the three realms of Land, Sea and Sky or Otherworld, Middle World, Underworld, or some other tripartite cosmology, rather than using the traditional four element/direction associations.

What Ritual Calendars Are Used?

So, when are rituals performed? OBOD, BDO, ADF and the Henge of Keltria all follow the Neo-pagan 8-festival ritual calendar. AODA officially celebrates the solstices and equinoxes with the Celtic cross-quarter days being optional, while RDNA celebrates the Celtic cross-quarter days with the solstices and equinoxes being optional.



The Henge of Keltria also has two lunar rituals, the Mistletoe Rite, celebrated on the 6th night of the moon and the initiates-only Vervain Rite, celebrated on the 3rd quarter of the moon. There are also two Keltrian yearly feasts, the Feast of Age and the Feast of Remembrance.

Who May Attend Ritual?

Now that you know a little bit about the rituals, would it be possible for a nonmember to attend these rituals? For most rituals, there are few or no restrictions in any of the groups as to whether you need to be a member or an initiate to attend rituals. ADF seasonal rituals are emphatically open to the public, but individual groves may have restricted lunar or other rituals. Keltrian rituals, except initiations and the Vervain Rite are also officially open to non-initiates. Likewise, Reformed Druid rituals are open to all comers. AODA restricts

only its initiations, confirmations and elevations to persons of the appropriate degree, but its seasonal rituals may be attended by nonmembers. OBOD rituals, except initiations, are not restricted to members, but individual groves or seed groups may decide to restrict rituals to members only. Chances are even then that a nonmember may be invited to attend. BDO frequently hosts open rituals that are open to all, but individual groves may have private rituals.



Pine Tree by the Sidewalk (An Abrupt Story)

By David A. Elizondo

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When I think about pine trees I think about a grove of pine trees. A grove, maybe a circle of trees in some forest. Sometimes I become attached to some trees, in this case one pine tree by a sidewalk in an urban setting. Being attached to this one particular tree I lost sight of another larger one about forty feet away.

So everyday I walk down a hill to catch the city bus on my way to work. The pine tree is there about six feet from the sidewalk. Its large pine cones sometimes fall on the sidewalk but mostly fall in the gravel surrounding the parking lot where it is located. It is one of those trees that is not too thick nor full in its branches. A type of "scrawny" tree.

I have even picked up some pine cones to use in art projects. The strange thing about pine cones is that they may seem a bit kitsch when used in a certain context. Yet, I guess that the tree itself would consider this rather ridiculous.

One night as I walking up the hill after a day at work, in the darkness I saw a stump where the pine tree had been. A somewhat ugly-cut stump with a sharp angle projecting upwards. A short distance away were the remains of the tree in an odd-shaped heap of sectioned trunk and branch. The surrounding area cushioned with pine cones and pine needles.

I was witness to a murder of sorts. And that is coming from one that has cut down many a tree for a variety of reasons. There is the nuisance tree, the dangerous tree, and the unwanted tree. Yet, this dismembered pine tree by the sidewalk had become a source of joy every day I passed it.

To say that I worshipped this tree is to imply that in the Druid sense of the word, I came to identify with it. It had been growing for years and it had been part of my life for the last four of those years. My first reaction was sadness, but outrage was unnecessary because the deed had already been done.

The other larger tree is still in the background



Nature Conservancy Study Finds Today's Kids Are Choosing TV over Trees

Nature Conservancy-Funded Study Finds Visits Decline
Video Games, Television, and Internet Use May Be the Reason

A Nature Conservancy-funded study to be published next month found that per capita visits to U.S. national parks have been declining since 1987, after having risen for the previous 50 years. The drop occurs as the use of electronic media is on the rise — something that researchers call "evidence of a fundamental shift away from people's appreciation of nature."

"When children choose TVs over trees, they lose touch with the physical world outside and the fundamental connection of those places to our daily lives," said Steve McCormick, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy. "A simulated waterfall can never compare with the wonder of Niagara Falls, and an electronic world cannot replicate the awe of standing at the base of half-dome in Yosemite or watching the eruption of Old Faithful. These places aren't just part of the American experience; they're part of the human experience — something no one should miss."

The data was analyzed by University of Illinois ecologist Oliver Pergams and Stroud Water Research Center ecologist Patricia Zaradic with contributions from Conservancy Lead Scientist Peter Kareiva. The project was funded through a National Science Foundation grant to The Nature Conservancy.

While more than two dozen variables were tested, Pergams said that video games, home movie rentals, going out to movies, Internet use, and rising fuel prices explained almost 98 percent of the decline in people visiting national parks.

"It's fairly stunning," Pergams said, but he cautioned that correlation is not the same as causation. "We've shown statistically that the rise in use of these various types of media, as well as oil prices, is so highly correlated with the decline in national park visits that there is likely to be some association."

Pergams and Zaradic ruled out variables such as family income, aging of the population, a recent rise in foreign travel or park capacity as major factors. These variables were tested, but the correlations were not nearly as strong as home entertainment and fuel prices, Pergams said. He added that further research is needed to explain the relationships found in this study.

Both the researchers and McCormick also noted that the results of the study point to a need to find ways to connect children to the special places and natural systems that sustain us all. "We demonstrate our values in the way we allocate our time," suggested Zaradic. "Research indicates that children who experience nature with a mentor develop an appreciation of nature as adults."

"Achieving meaningful conservation in the 21st century takes tremendous commitment, innovation, and

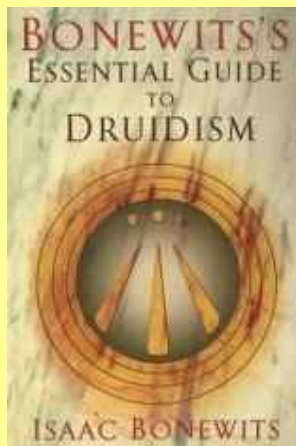
collaboration," added McCormick. "Conservation is becoming increasingly more difficult as the pressure to develop natural areas becomes intensified, and we will be relying on the next generation to carry forth this very important work."

Peter Kareiva, Lead Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, added, "Nature cannot just be found in exotic, far-away continents. From each city to every subdivision, there must be access to lands and waters that inspire and teach. This study reminds us that we need to do conservation to connect with children."

The Conservancy continues to step up its efforts to engage young people in environmental and conservation issues through the organization's Web site, such as by offering podcasts (<http://www.nature.org/podcasts/>) for "nature on the go" and by allowing people to join the Great Places Network via email (go to https://support.nature.org/site/SPageServer?pagename=reg003_xx).

The Conservancy has also worked with parents on a "Take Your Child To Nature Day," and at the end of this month, the Conservancy and the National Park Service are sponsoring a "BioBlitz" educational activity at Potomac Gorge near Washington, DC. There are ample volunteer opportunities at many of the 1,400 other nature preserves as well.

The study is set to be published in the Journal of Environmental Management next month.



Bonewits' Essential Guide to Druidism (BEGD)

Reviewed by Michael Scharding, Digitalis Grove of D.C.
mikerdna@hotmail.com

Feel free to post the review anywhere, minus the RDNA specific contents at the end which would bore most purchasers of the book.

THE EXECUTIVE REVIEW

Bonewits' Essential Guide to Druidism (BEGD) is a masterpiece in the vibrant growing field of modern Druidism. It is an indispensable library addition not only to the new folk interested in joining a Druid organization, but also to the veteran Druid who is teaching a study course at her/his own Grove. BEGD is a succinct and refined introduction (267pgs) to the variety of Druidisms now practiced in America and Britain. It clearly shows how they developed, compares their structure, and gives enticing examples of their words, sample rituals, and introduces some of their colorful leaders.

BEGD is the first book one should read on modern Druidism, but it is certainly not the last one; the reader's appetite should be whetted for yet deeper material afterwards. Indeed, after dispelling myths and correcting misconceptions and providing a framework of accepted facts, history and eye-opening comparisons; the BEGD's priceless bibliography and internet web-links illuminate several ways to pursue further trustworthy academic studies and also where to find 'inspirational' and contemporary works (and he explains the difference between the two). In conclusion, it will give prospective Druids (and less-well-connected old-

timers) a firmer foundation of background information, reliable resources, and a view of the "big picture" of this fascinating religious movement. And now for the rather longer, more nuanced review that this book richly deserves

******* THE LONGER DETAILED REVIEW *******

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I (Mike Scharding) have run the International Druid Archives since 1992; cataloguing magazines, historical records, pamphlets and books by and about modern Druidism, that first appeared in the early 1960s in the U.S. with surprisingly little connection to their older British siblings; whose predecessors might date back to the 18th century. With their often obscure roots, modern Druidism is a confusingly diverse genre of religious sub-groups, with up-to-now few authoritative reference guides.



Indeed there are dozens of Druid organizations today clamoring for attention, besides the "big four" (RDNA, ADF, Keltria and OBOD). Although cross-memberships occurs frequently among the 50,000 plus modern Druid practitioners today, there are literally only a handful of Druids who have been intimately familiar with these groups over the decades AND are also talented writers and gifted speakers. Isaac Bonewits is probably the most famous, well traveled, and prolific publishers amongst these few revered elders. Therefore, this book has been highly anticipated, and I would be frankly stunned if BEGD isn't quickly found at every Druidism 101 class offered to incoming members of all groups, or on the shelves of the quite numerous solitary Druids.



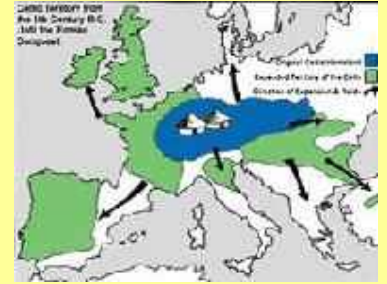
Bonewits' straight-forward advice and careful scholarship are influential and often trendsetting. What he predicts, is usually accepted as the common standpoint about 10 years later, by some estimates. I, myself, have not always agreed with Bonewits on some finer tangential points (such is our argumentative nature) and I gently resist the allure of his "progressivism" or the lightly implied inevitable "development" of Druidism. That said, however, I have grudgingly developed an admiration for his tireless dedication and ability to repetitively explain the basics of Druidism to any-and-all crowds on the lecture circuit and numerous articles in various journals and websites. Bonewits is a networking extraordinaire, one who either personally met all the major players, or has corresponded with them. This is a vital resource for any researcher of Druid groups; where the personality of the leaders gives key momentum to their (more-or-less democratic) group's direction. As with most similar groups, you'll find exceptions, and he acknowledges that frequently enough.

And yet despite his great talents, this book is not about Bonewits himself, a surprisingly modest and humble fellow (and straightforward about his biases and limits) with a rich sense of humor. The BEGD is really about DRUIDISM; the true passionate love of his life. Even for those hard-core scholars of these movements, familiar with his widely scattered and reprinted essays, much of this book will be pleasantly familiar to you, with a few surprises. Like a necklaced-string of fine pearls, most of the 33 short essays have been lovingly polished by decades of rewrites, painstaking draft reviews by fellow Druid leaders (including myself), and critical input from innumerable public lectures on these topics. Now, finally, they have all been seamlessly integrated in a single affordable book, where the true genius of the author, with his hand ever on the pulse of Druidism, can be better appreciated. It is my pleasure to now convince you of BEGD's charms.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK?

Naturally, the 33 essays of the book have been divided into nine parts (i.e. three times three, which is very Druidic, of course). The first three parts deal with the three different "stages" of Druidism; a catchy historical division that Bonewits invented by himself during the 1970s. Each section discusses the rise and fall of various organizations, who influenced them, and what they professed.

Part One, Paleopagan Druidism. He broadly chronicles the development of Indo-European customs and emergence of Celtic Druidism across Europe, until their disappearance soon after 500 CE. The underlying story being that religions, ethnicities and peoples changed and redefined themselves throughout history. He discusses ramifications of potential biases in academic research of books from different centuries.



Part Two, Meso-"pagan" Druidism. During the chaotic efflorescence of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, there was also growth of Celtic folk studies and melding of liberal Christianity and fraternal groups from 17th to 20th century. Many of them styled themselves "Druids", and continue to this day, often capturing the attention of world media with their flamboyant annual festivals.

Part Three, Neopagan Druidism. This phase began with efforts by "Mesopagan" Druidic groups in the 1970s to dispense with monotheistic concepts and adopt polytheism and magic, while making timely adaptations and accommodations to modern society, and a greater environmental appreciation. These types of Druids are still in a stage of rampant diversification and development, and is the special focus of concern for the BEGD.

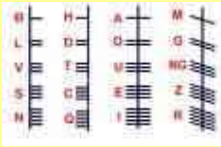


Part Four responsibly reminds the reader that every movement has its charlatans and con artists to be wary of. BEGD provides a useful guideline chart (1-10 scale) [called "ABCDEF"] to evaluate any prospective religion for 13 key oppressive elements. For those concerned about "cults", it is intriguing that many mainstream religions score far less favorably than the average Druid group; most of whose members have strong aversions to such groups that they grew up in. It is a stern recommendation of certain baseline expectations of treatment that modern Druids have come to expect for their members.

Part Five describes the general beliefs of modern Druids, as far as they can be ascertained from printed statements, and Bonewits' own extensive conversations with members of every group over 35 years. While they might not be officially adopted, or believed by every member of every group, they would likely be acknowledged as exemplary by most Druids that I know. No book on Druids would be complete without an explanation of how the eight major festivals of Neopagan Druids developed (a mixture of Celtic and SURPRISE! Anglo-Germanic events) to make a "Wheel of the Year" with eight spokes at regular six week intervals. Many pre-1970 mesopagan Druid groups had only a few large annual events (such as the Summer Solstice), and more frequent lodge-type meetings. Always the fashion-diva, Bonewits wryly comments on the distinctive clothes, tools and symbols of Druids; with amusing insights on where they actually came from. Finally, he has always stressed that being a Druid isn't just about having fun outside, but also comes with self-enforced sobering responsibilities and/or obligations to ourselves, Nature, other religious minorities, and ultimately for the human-race.



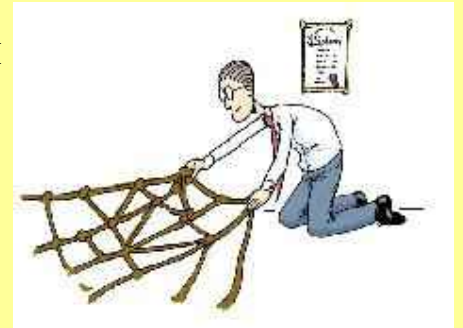
Part Six is a delightfully handy collection of sample official rituals from the "big four" Druid groups (OBOD, RDNA, ADF, Keltria). His most intense hobby over the years has been that of liturgical analysis (see his lengthy book "Rites of Worship"). He demystifies these four services, breaking them into steps, and briefly explains WHY they do things in a certain order in a practical down-to-earth manner. All too often people approach Druidic liturgy as too-reverenced-to-be-questioned, with the sometimes sad result that liturgies don't get adapted for changing needs of the group.



Part Seven, in addition to the liturgy of groups, Bonewits includes a treatise on Druidic divination and one on Druidic magic, (a bit more often practiced by individuals, but sometimes by groups). He discourses on the much-misunderstood Ogham "alphabet", and shows how many groups have added and encouraged non-ancient-Celtic forms of divination. Previous to BEGD, Bonewits wrote two "nuts-and-bolts" books in a sociological and rational manner on the 26 general principles or laws that explain why people do magic in certain formats (see "Real Magic" and "Authentic Thaumaturgy" on Amazon). He also provides a few examples of how modern Druids have taken surviving semi-Christian folk charms and "repaganized" them, and stresses the importance of incorporating poetry, dance, song and arts into liturgy.

Part Eight. As I mentioned before, Bonewits is great at rationally showing the historical development and diversification of Druidism, but he also has an irrepressible vision and hope for the future of Druidism. He has repeated this chapter's contents for decades, and inspired legions of Druids; and bit by bit, elements of it are coming true. For example, he encourages Druids to focus on improving training programs, attain legal tax-exempt status as religious charities (true for three of the four big groups today), start greater advocacy campaigns, start giving their priests a working salary like mainstream faiths, and hold large public services for Druids and members of the general Neopagan community.

Finally, don't overlook the appendices ("**Part Nine**"). The lengthy bibliography and internet resources are up-to-date, listing 100 books that I believe I've seen on most reputable reading lists of the big four groups. You see, the number of books on "Druids", modern and ancient, have been exponentially increasing since the 1950s; some of them dry and academic, others wildly inaccurate (but interesting), and some are just pleasant personal observations. I agree with Bonewits, that a firm foundation in known facts, an informed awareness of disputed issues, and a liberal splash of inspirational works makes for a well-educated modern Druid. Being the indefatigable networker he is, Bonewits also provides the weblinks to most of the known Druid groups, for you to explore those that have caught your interest. He also mercifully moved some extra, detailed, background information on the Celtic language, terminology, Indo-European religious system to the appendix, to shorten the earlier introduction to Paleopagan Druids in part one.



SIMILAR BOOKS TO B.E.G.D.



It should be noted, that BEGD did not spring from the void. If you enjoy Bonewit's approach to the history and practice of modern Druidism, you'll probably like the following four books:

Rebirth of Druidry (aka *Druid Renaissance*) by Phillip Carr-Gomm of OBOD, 2003. Bonewits assisted in this book, writing a chapter on American Druidry. *Rebirth of Druidry* goes into extensive detail about the legion of British groups that have called themselves Druids, while BEGD focuses more on the American groups.

The Solitary Druid by Robert Ellison of ADF, 2005. This makes a fine complement to BEGD, which focuses on groups. 80% of most modern Druids don't have regular access to groups, and communicate by mail, or prefer their own company. This a book for them on do-it-by-yourself Druidism.

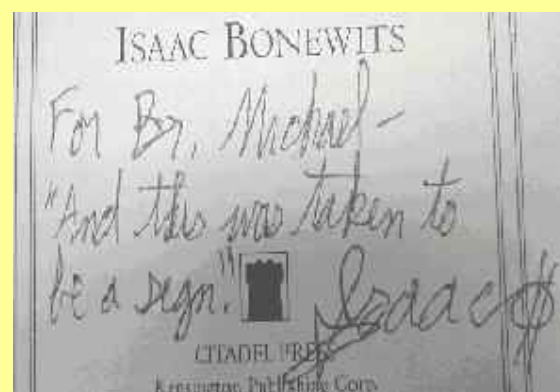
American Druidism by Daniel Hansen, 1995. Now out of print, but sometimes available, was a slimmer (160 pgs), a much simpler publication that I helped to edit, that discussed some of the same BEGD topics.

Drawing Down the Moon, by Margot Adler, 1979, 1986, 2003. DDTM talks of Neopaganism as a whole, with each edition updating the current history of the movement.

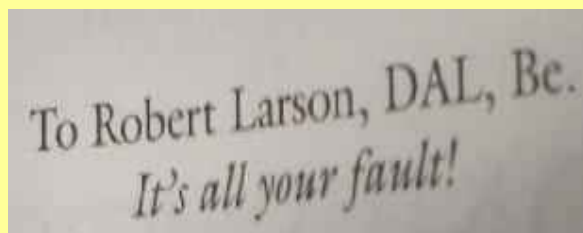
EXTRA NOTES FOR THE RDNA READER

As you may know, Isaac Bonewits was a very active member of the RDNA and several offshoot branches in the 1960s to 1980s; republishing the original *The Druid Chronicles* with a great number of extra essays and odds-and-ends in 1976. In fact quite a few of BEGDs essays find their origins in that volume. In the 1980s and onward, his focus has been mostly on ADF druidism, which he founded and nurtured. There are a few points in his recollection of the RDNA that I would like to bring to your attention.

Bonewits still has the inimitable sense of humor. I got an early edition with a personal note and signature where he amusingly says, "And this was taken to be a sign." He mischievously pokes a bit of fun at all the other Druid groups, as you'd expect from an RDNA member, and self-effacingly refers to some of the "troubles" he's caused or participated in.



Indeed, over the years, the rift between the factions of Berkeley and Carleton have seemingly been healed and an uneasy truce has been reached. Bonewits' choice of language here is conciliatory and generous. He explains the foibles, diversity and odd customs that really set apart the RDNA. He has a few quotes from Frangquist's work, the *Druid Chronicles*, including a closing meditation at the end of BEGD. He deciphers a sample of our liturgy, and several nice compliments for myself; which is a bit embarrassing, since such luminaries as David Fisher and Richard Shelton aren't mentioned.



Druids have their opinions and preferences, don't we all? Bonewits is still Bonewits, and there is still the light assertion that most (if not all) Druidisms are going to evolve towards his model or vision; and he might well be right over the decades to come. But it bothers me just a little, that I feel left "by the side of the road" by his formula, that the style of Druidism that I practice is somehow a quaint little branch, an ever-so-gently

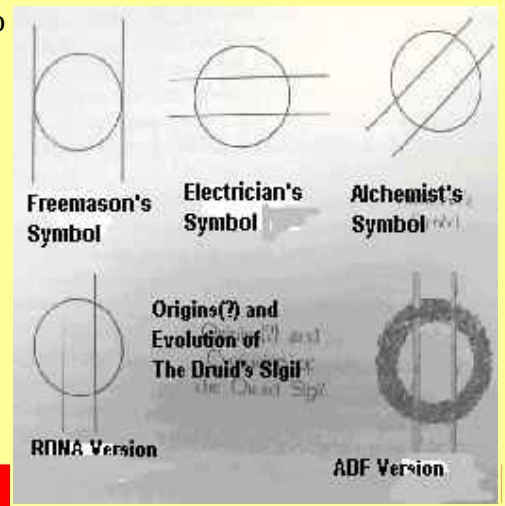
implied anachronism that will fade away gently. However, the RDNA has never taken itself too seriously or desired to "last forever", and I am probably just over sensitive on the topic.

During the 20 pages devoted solely to the RDNA, there is a perplexing eight pages devoted to the Hassidic Druids of North America; which was a little brainstorm practice group for Bonewits and his friends in St. Louis from 1975-1977. Sort of like a training ground for complicated Druidical structures. You can read those scriptures in Part 5 of ARDA <http://orgs.carleton.edu/Druids/ARDA2/doc/2part5.doc> The HDNA grove was embarrassingly, as he admits, very "Seventies", but wildly creative. I'll admit that it vividly shows the possibilities of local grove development within the loose national structure of the RDNA. Yet, eight pages seems a bit "doting" to me and I would have included more on the Live Oak Grove and discussed more of the other Berkeley members, who continue to (perhaps) greater influence the modern course of events.

A few mistakes are in the book. The early RDNA members met on Saturday afternoons, not on Sundays. The electrical symbol for an "outlet" does look like the Druid sigil on its side but the lines usually don't extend past the circle, except possibly in a handwritten version. The alchemical symbol for oil has only one line through it, at an angle, not two.

But I believe most Reformed Druids will find Brother Isaac's BEGD to be a valued addition to their personal archives; and certainly, people will probably ask you about the RDNA sections in the book, so it might be wise to be familiar with their contents. I also believe most RDNA Druids will also be intrigued by the other Druid groups out there, and it will entice you to interact and discuss matters of concern with them. If you like it, please encourage others to get a copy too, before it goes out of print.

I welcome any additional comments you'd like to make after you read it. Send those e-mails to me at mikerdna@hotmail.com



MORE NEWS



Taking a Bite out of 'Organics'

August 1, 2006

For organic farmer Judith Redmond and others like her, Michael Pollan, who wrote "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals," is more than a bestselling author. "In our world," she said, "he's a rock star."

That's why the balding, bespectacled Pollan cannot shop at his Berkeley farmers market without being approached by adoring fans who thank him for bringing debates about green living and the "sustainable food movement" into the mainstream.

They have all read his book, which calls Americans "the people of corn" and suggests that we are a hopelessly obese and diabetic nation because of the presence of corn in everything we ingest from the feed our cattle eat to the high fructose corn syrup in our soda. These readers feel as if they intimately knew Rosie, the organic chicken Pollan tracked in the book only to discover that her free-range, pastoral life was more myth than reality. And when, in the New York Times magazine, Pollan weighed the pros and cons of Wal-Mart entering the organic food business, readers were riveted.

How best to live authentically green is the question Pollan keeps coming back to. It's a debate that's surfacing in architecture (Do we really need that wood from halfway across the world?), in fashion (Is there genetically engineered corn in my jeans?), in beauty (What are all these chemical ingredients?) and even in fitness (What about the plastics in my yoga mat?). But nothing is more visceral than the food we eat, as Pollan discovered in May when more than 300 people showed up to see him at a Seattle bookstore.

"I had never seen a crowd like that at a bookstore," Pollan said. "After I talked for a while I realized this wasn't about me. The energy in the room was political. Honestly, I think there are more important issues the health of the republic, whether we are going to lapse into tyranny, the war in Iraq so I began to ask myself: Why are people turning out in such big numbers to talk about food and grass-fed beef?"

Probably for the same reason that in June Pollan's friendly-yet-tense online exchange with John P. Mackey,

the co-founder and chief executive of Whole Foods, was eagerly read and e-mailed among the green intelligentsia, who were pleased Pollan took on the corporate titan. (It can be accessed on Mackey's blog on the Whole Foods website or at michaelpollan.com.)

"Other issues are hard to do something about," Pollan said. "Food is unique because we can all do something about it today. We get to decide three times a day what we take into our bodies, so we can vote with our forks and do our part to change the world."

The conflict between the author and the CEO started in the pages of Pollan's book, where he wrote that some "jet-setting" organic asparagus from Argentina he had bought at Whole Foods may have been pesticide free, but it tasted like "damp cardboard" and what's "organic" about all the fuel it took to get it to California? Then there was the organic milk he bought there the Holsteins that produced it ingested organic corn, but they were confined to inhumane feedlots and milked three times a day just like their conventional counterparts.



Mackey started the exchange with an open letter, posted on the Whole Foods website, that chastised Pollan for not interviewing him for the book. Mackey requested a meeting and offered Pollan a \$25 gift certificate to make up for the disappointing asparagus. Several e-mails and one face-to-face meeting later, the chain eased its distribution policies, making it easier for individual stores to work directly with small farmers. Whole Foods even allocated \$10 million for small loans to local farmers.

Pollan said his meeting with Mackey made him more sympathetic to the forces the executive has to deal with, but he pointed out that "organic is going through an identity crisis." Exchanges like this, he said, encourage people to ask, what does "organic" mean, anyway? And do those values get compromised when organic business reaches corporate, industrial proportions?

This kind of probing is why Doreen Stabinsky, who works on agriculture issues for Greenpeace in Latin America, e-mails most things Pollan writes to colleagues all over the world. "He keeps issues on the table that wouldn't otherwise be there, especially if market forces forged ahead unchecked," she said.

Pollan finds his newfound status as a kind of public conscience of the sustainable food movement both shocking and heartening. After all, debates about the nuances of green have been going on for decades, especially in Berkeley, where Pollan moved to from New York in 2003 to become a journalism professor at UC Berkeley. But if he has taken the discussion to a new level of public awareness, he won't characterize himself as an activist, because he said he wants to preserve his journalistic independence.

The danger, he said, is getting "swept up in the movement, especially when I agree with a lot of it." But Northern California farmer Redmond, co-owner of Full Belly Farm, said that whether Pollan likes it or not, he is an activist. Since the Mackey/Pollan exchange, she said, she has noticed "a sea change of difference" in the way Whole Foods is doing business in her region. (Whole Foods turned down requests for comment for this article.)

Now Wal-Mart is calling Pollan to discuss organics, and the public-speaking requests are "endless." While he hasn't endured the food industry's wrath, as did author Eric Schlosser ("Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal"), who has been met with protests and smear campaigns, Pollan's opinions are not always embraced. George Kaligrdis, the president of Ojai-based George's Organic, who is also very active in the Organic Trade Assn. (which counts among its members big organic businesses like Whole Foods), called Pollan an unrealistic "flame thrower" who has the unfair advantage of a powerful platform. "No one thinks buying local and supporting local farmers is a bad idea, but it's easier said than done," he said. "There are already forums to have these conversations. So why does someone have to throw a bomb to get attention?"

Pollan said there's some truth to the charge that he is a provocateur. "I don't want to preach to the choir," he said. "I could have a career writing for people who already care about and are obsessed by food. But I want

to talk to people who haven't thought about their food before."

But being a journalist has gotten a little complicated because as Pollan's renown grows, he jeopardizes his access to sources such as big agri-business, which doesn't want his scrutiny. That's one reason he teaches a journalism course at UC Berkeley called Following the Food Chain.

"I consider teaching part of my political work," he said, noting that now his students write the stories he no longer can. One has already been published in Harper's Magazine (where Pollan used to be the executive editor), and another wrote a piece for the New York Times.

Pollan said he hasn't yet determined the subject of his next book, but he'll continue to delve into the soul of organics by contemplating topics such as animal welfare and whether organic Coca-Cola and Twinkies are a good idea for our health and our environment.

"That's one of the great things I can do as a writer," he said. "I can take a topic like agriculture that's generally not very interesting and tell some stories that hopefully will make it accessible and meaningful to people who didn't care about it before."



Astronomical Lughnasadh will occur this year on Aug 7th at 8:42 a.m. as 15 degrees of Leo or on Aug. 7th, about three hours later, at 11:51 a.m. as 16 degrees 18 minutes decl .

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This is the end of the Lughnasadh issue



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