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An Un-Official Publication  of the Reformed Druids

## Yule, Year 44 (December 21, 2006)

Volume 22, Number 8



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**Yule**, Midwinter Solstice, the Shortest Day, Longest Night, a minor High Day in the Druid Calendar. As far as we know the ancient Celts did not celebrate the Winter Solstice. There is no historical evidence of the same kind of assemblies that we find existed for the four fire festivals of Oimelc, Beltaine, Lughnasadh, and Samhain. These festivals were pastoral/agricultural in origin and later developed into festivals that were great gatherings of the Celtic tribes where feasting and games occurred and political and legal matters were settled. The Druids might have marked the day and used

it to calculate when the fire festivals were to occur. Depending on the school of thought and the method of calculation, the four major High Days or fire festivals fall directly between the solstices and equinoxes.

A prehistoric monument located in County Meath in the Boyne River Valley of Ireland about 50 miles north of Dublin, Newgrange, like Stonehenge, was not built by the Celts. The Celts knew about the grass-covered mound because it shows up in their ancient tales. The kings of Tara were said to be buried there. Known as Brugh na Boinne, "hostel of the Boyne (River) in Irish, it was considered to be the home of the Tuatha De Danann, the residence of Boand and of the Dagda, and later Oengus Og., whom the Dagda gave the mound. Newgrange dates back to around 3200 BC, 1,000 years prior to the building of Stonehenge. Also like Stonehenge, no one really knows who built Newgrange other than Neolithic people in pre-Celtic Ireland. This does not mean however that these people were not sophisticated in their knowledge and practice. Its builders were not "primitive" by any means.

Newgrange is a "passage" tomb. A passage tomb is a grave in which access is gained through a passage, both of which are covered by a round mound of earth and stone, and leads to a chamber where the dead were placed. The walls and roof are built of large slabs of stone and standing stones without the benefit of mortar. The entrance to the passage tomb of Newgrange is in the south-east of the mound, which is most noteworthy.

The most remarkable thing about Newgrange is that the entrance to the main chamber of the 62 foot long passage tomb was aligned precisely on the point on the horizon where the sun rises at the Winter Solstice. It is then that for 17 minutes light from the rising sun shines through the passage. On the front part of the passage roof, what first looked like a false lintel above, but is now known as a "roof box," is a slit made from the first two roof slabs of the passage. It is through this slit that the first rays of the rising sun penetrate to the back of the chamber on the Solstice.



In a recent article in the December 7th of National Geographic News, "Ancient Irish Tomb Big Draw at Winter Solstice," Edward Krupp, director of the newly remodeled Griffith Park Observatory in Los Angeles, explains in an interview how Newgrange incorporated knowledge that could only have been gained through precise astronomical observations.

"The people who built it knew about the winter solstice-knew when it occurred, knew where the sun would rise-and built a monument that took advantage of that event and incorporated it symbolically into the monument," he said.

"It is very deliberately designed and constructed to capture the light of the rising sun at the winter solstice, to allow that beam of light to fall on the innermost chambers of it-a place where in fact the remains of the honored dead were incorporated," he said.

"The winter solstice is a crucial moment, in that it marks the time the sun has reached the depths of winter-its darkest moment, its death, [and] its rebirth," Krupp said.

Wherever you may be the morning of the Winter Solstice, go outside at sunrise and face the South East, for the Sun is in its most southern position of the entire year, and welcome the returning of the light and longer days. Sunrise can be found in your local newspaper, almanac, or Lunabar cyber-almanac type program. Greet the New Sun and shout, "Seall!" (Look! "sha?") in your best Gaelic, "All hail the returning of the light!"



# News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



## Digitalis Grove: News from Arlington, VA

Perhaps you folks noticed, that this is the **50th issue** of the most recent incarnation of the *Druid Missal-Any* magazine? **Hurrah!** It has certainly been an honor and a pleasure for the last 6.25 years to assist Stacey in distributing her publication to folks around the world. My rough estimates are that about 150-200 folks are reading each issue, but really, if only 2 or 3 were reading it, I think it would be worth the hours that she puts into it, if only for the way it has transformed her from a shy and meek Druid, to the confident firebrand she is today in our dialogues. :) One need not change the world to make a difference, merely changing yourself is enough to begin with, what comes beyond that is just icing on the cake.

After a period of 4 months of odd silence, I heard again from Azeem, about as regular a member as my Grove has ever had. When folks lose contact with you in Druidism, you often wonder first at their reasons. Perhaps, they had found something more attractive, is your first thought and hope. Perhaps, they moved and forgot to tell you? Perhaps you said something stupid or insulting? You send an e-mail or two, and no response. Sigh. Life goes on, and then, sometimes, they write back, with an apology for disappearing, and the sun shines again on your heart. Finding friends again is a joy like few others in life.

Three months to go before going overseas. There seems to be less and less time to take care of the myriad small items on an ever-lengthening checklist. It will be good for me. A new expedition to gather experiences, thoughts, and ideas to bring back and share with folks here in the States.

Yours in the Mother,  
Mike the FoOl



## Rockspray Proto-grove: News from Indiana

Our grove members still enjoy the outside activities during the winter; we all seem to be more aware of our surroundings. We have been focusing more inward and working on issues that have been pushed back during the warmer months. As of yet we have not made plans for Yule, it's on our to do list.

Natures Blessing,  
Matt

## Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News From Minnesota



Seasonal Salutations, siblings!

Good gravy, but the holidays do roll in fast around here, don't they? Samhain was two weeks ago, and our beloved sister Stacey is already cracking the whip at us for the Yule installment for the Missal-any. (We love you Stacey.)

What's going on? Huh...good question. Lou and I wound up going to the Zoo Boo for Samhain. We're members of the Minnesota Zoo, and they do it up so cute for the kids, we just had to go. It was also really fun because we were there "after hours," and the critters were a lot more active as the sun went down. The lemurs...I've never seen the lemurs so active and playful. They bounced from branch to branch howling at the moon and themselves.

Speaking of burning in hell...ok, no one actually mentioned it, but it's what came to mind...Thanksgiving is next week. My beloved brother, whom I love more than life itself, and I'd gladly take a bullet for, wound up marrying...oh, lordy...the term...what is the right term for her? Shrew is too delicate. I'd use the B-word...but that would be an insult to other Bs out there. This is the woman who made a family member return "The Jungle Book" DVD they had bought for her kids for Christmas one year because "it's too violent." It's DISNEY! Since when is Disney too violent?! We all remember Baloo shaking his tush and singing "The Bear Necessities"...yeah...that's too violent. The boys are now 13 and 15 years old, and for Christmas last year, I got the boys paint ball guns. Yep...she made me return them. They're too violent. Keep in mind, these kids have REAL bows and arrows, REAL BB guns, and more knives than a ginsu chef. And they use these REAL weapons on REAL critters. These kids are better armed than a lot of those wacko right-winger fundie militia nutjobs who live in compounds out in the toolies somewhere. But paint ball is too violent. She won't let my brother buy a good case of beer for himself, because "beer is all the same", but she'll dump a fortune into her wine collection...because that's different. She's horrible. No really. Holy, self-righteous, condescending, life-sucking, will-draining succubus. And Thanksgiving is at their house this year.

It gets worse.

Her parents are without destination this year, so they will be there as well. Ok...with regards to her mother, my sister-in-law comes by it honestly, and she's mild compared to her mother. Ok...follow along...it gets worse. Her mother is Lutheran, my folks are Catholic. Shouldn't be a problem for the majority of the civilized world, right? But you can't use her mother and "civilized" in the same sentence. She throws Catholic-bashing barbs at my father every time they're in the same room. And even though they're Catholic, my father is NOT one to turn the other cheek. So Lou and I may be pulling my father off of her mother at some point...then again, I may just let him give her a good whipping once and for all. My mother, bless her heart, is under contract to be Switzerland in all of this. My succubus-in-law will obviously side with her mother. My brother fears for his mortality, so he'll stay Switzerland My father knows I'll have his back. So we're looking at a super-sized Clash Of The Titans on Thanksgiving.

Please pass the mashed potatoes.

My brother has begged me to bring a large bottle of brandy and a straw for him. I think he's planning on spending this Thanksgiving hiding in the garage and drinking heavily. My sister has asked me to text-message her once the succubus-in-law's mother leaves, so she knows it's safe to come over (I'm deadly serious about that...she wants me to text her when it's safe to come over). And I'm planning on putting down an entire bottle of Jamison whiskey by myself. Guess Lou will be driving that night.

So whatever family woes you may be going through this holiday season, is it really going to be as bad as what's on my plate this year?

And on that uplifting seasonal stress moment; my best advice to you all is to keep those libations flowing...it will all be over in another couple of weeks or so.

The holidays are here...wear a helmet.

Gigawabamin nagutch,  
and yours in the Mother,  
Julie Ann and Lou



### **The Nine Oaks & Mystic Well Protogrove: News from Nevada**

Being desert dwellers our environment is different here, its a better time to plant tree's and observe nature that seems to not go into the waters of sleep cycle as it would in a non-desert area. During this time our own practices are more meditative with influences of psychic development, as we strive to be more 'attuned' with our harsher 'red rock' field scapes. Now is the time we head forth and leave 'offerings' to the native spirits then to those we choose to call upon ourselves, as we prepare for the 'hearth time' of Yule rites and connect to the cycle that is yet coming and is returning!

Some of us who hold the Norse side most dear will conduct a daily 12 nights of Yule to the wreath burning on the 12 night itself and the Grove house will be 'hosting' a feast for Mothers Night and Solstice for the growing members of the Nine Oaks n Mystic Well, we will also be holding our own 'classes' on the rites and offerings to those who come and everything we do is 'free of charge', always and ever!

We are expecting at least 40 people to come and celebrate the 'seasonal tide' with us, and another 'local grove' will also be attending!

Blessings to all the Groves and Protogroves of the RDNA during this sleep-time cycle of the year.

Beleno's acting Protogrove 'fire-keeper'



### **Canine Grove: News from Oregon**

Here in the soggy valley of Willamette in the land of Oregon, this soaked solitary druid will be traveling to the foothills of Mt. Hood to commune with nature, then off to the relatives to pass out Yule gifts, and eat a lot.

Bindii



### **Duir De Danu Grove: News from California**

This weekend Darren and I will be heading up to the covenstead in Redding. I will be portraying Mother Berchta as in other years. The 24th, which is Mother's Night, I will be entertaining my daughter. The 25th we will be watching movies. I've recently learned that the Celtic term for Yule is Alban Arthuan.

Tegwedd

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## Sunset Proto-Grove: News from California

I seem to long for the arrival of the season of sleep each year. The summer's long days are gone, vacations are completed, gardens have been harvested and the ground is left allowing it to rest through the winter season. Daffodil bulbs have been planted for spring.

Our last major celebration of the summer ends with the season in our house, as child #1's big day is celebrated along with Samhain...and as I take down streamers and finish off left over cake (for breakfast ) my thoughts turn to what is next.



This year I escaped the pressure of cooking for family on Thanksgiving so my thoughts turn to Yule and our little family's traditions surrounding it.

In our home our Yule traditions are mixed with those of our youth. Over the years we have made a conscious effort to downplay the commercialism that surrounds the holidays and though both my husband and I were raised in religiously Christian families- for ourselves and our children the meaning of the holiday season revolves around sharing our love for others with others.

Some of our traditions are:

- Cleaning out the house and donating items that are little used or outgrown.
- Spending a day at a tree farm, selecting the perfect tree. (mom gets final approval privileges.)>br? - Inviting one or two close friend for cider and sweets while we trim the tree.
- Playing the Santa game with our youngest. This involves a lot of 'white lies' to keep him enjoying and looking forward to what being a 'good kid'; will mean to him on the 25th. :) We did a great job with child #1, as she bought into the idea of Santa whole heartedly until the age of 11. I blew it by using the same wrapping paper as Santa did. (Now she takes part in helping her brother enjoy Santa to the fullest.)
- During the month of December we decorate the house, enjoy lighting a fire, play board games, share something hot in a cup, and enjoy popcorn and movies together or listen to Italian opera on the stereo...which quickly gets changed to John Denver and the Muppets or the Chipmunks Christmas. LOL. (mom gets outvoted on opera every time.)

Mostly though this time of year, is a snugly one. We all like to pad around the house in slippers and robes on chilly evenings and mornings, and enjoy curling up with good books. We love brisk leaf crunching days at the park. I usually start thinking about the year to come and what my hopes and goals are for it. The idea of a New Years resolution is very strong for me, having been a diligent goal setter during this life. Last year goals were finishing a school degree, and working for a job promotion. Having accomplished those, this year's goal was to read more classics and to get a tan. LOL. (got to throw in easy ones, every once in a while.) Next year? Who knows.....maybe I'll start working toward that Third order.

Best Wishes to each of you for a warm and cozy season of sleep!

Skye

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**Poison Oak Grove: News from California**  
Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"



Though it may be the Season of Sleep, the Grove has been rather active on the social level. We had a visitor come from the AD's shamanic practice circle for the Samhain service and social. Influenced from the Ancestor Training workshop the AD attended last August we had an ancestor altar in addition to the ancestor plate we always have set at the table. Grove members brought photos and items of family members and friends who have gone on before to put on the altar as a further way of remembering and honoring them. On Dec. 3 Sister Oriana of Sunset Proto-Grove visited for a regular service. After the service we took a long hike along the old railroad grade as Sister Morag pointed out the different kinds of mushrooms that sprung up after the recent rains. There were no edible chanterelles to be found and we did not want to take our chances on the LBMs: "Little Brown Mushrooms."

The Grove tree project is almost complete. In spite of the efforts of two grove members we weren't able to find the Mountain Ash, or Rowan, for planting in the West position for the Fall Equinox. The Mountain Ash is just not a popular tree in this area and is more common in the Tahoe area. Deciding to give it one more try and getting advice from a local nursery the AD decided to do a search on the internet. We didn't think it would be possible to mail order a tree because the Arbor Foundation won't ship to California. However after a little clarification we found out nurseries won't ship west of the Mississippi because of beetles so it is still possible to do mail order. The AD ordered the little Ash (one gallon size) from (take note!) Forest Farm in Oregon, [www.forestfarm.com](http://www.forestfarm.com) (order from them, they are good people). They have an incredible selection and are run by a caring lot. We had never seen a tree or any package wrapped or that matter so thoroughly. It was in a three-foot tall narrow box, with tape crisscrossing the top of the pot, and the pot itself was taped to the inside. That little tree wasn't going anywhere. The little Ash arrived in a dormant state, looking like a stick. The leaf buds give promise of the spring to come.

The Holly proved to be only a minor challenge. It seems your basic Holly isn't that easy to find. People seem to be in a variegated frame of mind. It was the same thing with the Elderberry. Good old basic one-color plant doesn't seem to do. Lucky Poison Oak Grove, not only did we find a nice green Holly but it is self-pollinating so we will have berries! So, by Yule all the Grove trees will be in place. The next tasks to do will be build a permanent altar (and we have most of the stones from the old altar but that is another story ) and to dig the Toll Uaigh, or offering shaft. Soon the Grove site will be complete!



## Mission-ary Impossible

File Two: New Year's Days and Parking Lot Tree

By Mike the FoOl

Again, for those who missed the first installment of this column in Samhain, I am preparing to go into exile overseas on another missionary excursion for 2 years to South East Asia. I will write about my thoughts on various topics that arise during that preparation and journey. I hope they have meaning for you also. Feel free to write to me at [mikerdna@hotmail.com](mailto:mikerdna@hotmail.com) if you'd like to share those thoughts, or if you are going to be in my Grove (or Forest) there.

### New Year's Days

Samhain, Yule, January 1st, Chinese New Year, Easter, May Day . All these dates, and many more, symbolize an attempt by different cultures or eras to draw a line on the sandy shores of time and say, "from

here, we have a new beginning". Even the most linear-historical reality of some monotheistic religion, must acknowledge the necessity of cyclical renewal. We don't forget the past, we merely cease to dwell on the last year, and focus on the possibilities of another 12 to 13 months of future opportunities.



Indeed, sitting pretty on our laurels from the last year, or still mourning past failures, is a force for inertia. We often don't notice the train's whistle, stopping at various towns, giving us a chance to disembark. The old saying goes, "every day is a new day", yea I say, "everyday is a new year, a new century, a new millennium". If only you recognize this, and have the requisite courage, you need not wait one instant longer than now to embrace a new journey of discovery and exploration. You might not grasp the brass ring on the next spin of the merri-go-round, but what will you see around you as you turn again, and won't the next attempt be thrilling?

### **Parking Lot Tree**

I am also a creature of habit, and I like to park at the same spot every day at my college where I'm studying a language. I like that spot because there is a locust tree there, and from May 1st to December 1st, I would pull up under it's branches and look up at it. The leaves provided nice shade during the hot summer for my car, and I knew my little car wouldn't be an oven when I came back in the afternoon. As the weather cooled, the leaves began to turn yellow in September, and every day was a new natural painting of colors and tints. In November, day by day, leaves fell to Earth, having given up their duty of providing sustenance to that tree's branches, and now determined to produce new dirt to feed its roots. Now in December, the sky can be easily seen through the tree's stark branches, and it is not so beautiful or living-looking anymore. Although my mind knows that the tree will likely bloom again in March or April, I won't be here any longer to learn from that next phase. I will be overseas, in a land where leaves don't fall off every year, they are green until the tree simply dies when it is too old or sick.

### **Stay on Message**

What does a Missionary Druid have to say to folks? Some evangelistic Christians like to ask, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?" I don't have something so snappy, and Dalon ap Landu hasn't shown that much interest in having more friends.

We Druids, generally, don't spend a lot of time button-holing people on the street and directly telling them about our religion's finer theological points, for reasons that you probably know well already. In my case, I'm pretty open about what I am, but you have to find that out by paying attention to what things I'm interested in. For example, when talking about the Holidays, I mentioned I was celebrating Yule rather than Christmas this year in my class, and I was torn between having a live potted tree, a cut and dying tree, or an artificial tree to celebrate the resistance of life against the seductive kiss of death of winter. If folks follow up on that clue, they'll get another piece of my puzzle; if they don't know the difference, well, then, better luck next time.

What is my "message" to other folks? What does this, "guerrilla Druidism", seek to convey to the myriad of people who I will casually bump into during the course of my next two years? That message in our heart and soul need not be an embarrassing personal harangue, it is radiated every minute of every day from you. For the average 20 second encounter or passing a person on the street, my message may simply be, "I respect you, have a nice day," by word or gesture or just posture. Every "nice weather, today, eh?" will be infused with a blessing, and an urging tone to pay attention to Natural forces at work around you, Sir. Every piece of trash that is placed in the trashcan or recycling bin is a silent example or injunction to preserve the resources of this planet. Every passing moment speaks volumes to others, registering perhaps only subconsciously to most. Hopefully, those vibes are aiding in some way their own un-realized Druidical journeys, until like a mushroom, their awareness pops out of the ground after a fortuitous rain.



It's easy to talk like a saint, harder to carry it out. I hope I can live up to "every minute Druidism", and that it will come naturally from me without effort to all I meet and interact with. I sometimes need to give myself pep-talks in the morning while shaving. During this wintry time of "season's greetings" it is certainly easier than in hot and muggy July, when its easy to get ticked off at people. It is hard enough simply to do this during one-on-one heart-to-heart talks with friends, but my goal is to extend this basic message little by little to an ever-widening group of people. And while I'm doing so, hopefully I will notice and pay attention to what other folks are broadcasting daily also.

Blessings of the Earth Mother be Apparent to You,

Mike the FoOl



## Celtic Consciousness and the Concept of Evil Or Is There a Celtic Hell?

By Wade Baugher, Literary Druid  
<http://www.eDruid.com>

The Celts were a loosely connected group of tribes sharing many similarities in custom, language and social structure. The Druids appear to be one of those similarities. It seems that everywhere the Celtic language speaking peoples went, so went Druids. They were the intelligentsia of their people. They maintained a body of lore related to the well-being of the tuath (something like a clan only not quite so family-centric). They were also the religious specialists.

From what we can gather from classical accounts, high status graves, and later tales, the Celts seem to have believed in an otherworld where all people went after death. The classical authors seem fairly consistent about the Celtic belief in the immortality of the soul. There has been much debate about the exact meaning of some of the quotations that use terms translated into English as "reincarnation." My view is that they didn't think of it quite the same as eastern philosophers; that is to say, they didn't view it as a progression of rebirths best suited to work out karma.

It would appear they believed that when a person died in this world they would be reborn, as the same person, at the same age, in the otherworld - ready to carry on just as they were. When they died in that world they were reincarnated back into this one again and so on. Like I said, there is much debate on how to interpret some of the classical accounts. Later Irish tales seem to point toward a journey of the dead to otherworld-like islands. There were probably different beliefs in different places at different time.

The Celts did have clear concepts of right and wrong... order and chaos... lucky and unlucky. They relied on their religious specialists to support the tribe by using their arts to encourage right action over wrong, balance order with chaos, and divine lucky times over unlucky. They did not try to eradicate chaos as Christians might try to utterly defeat the devil. They honored all forces and understood that without chaos there could be no order. without darkness there could be no light. Without winter there could be no summer. Paradoxically, while chaotic forces out-of-balance were associated with infertility, when balanced with order, they were

considered generative. This co-mingling of opposites is perhaps reflective of a now lost origin story.

In the Irish tradition, a singularly important religious concept was "truth." It was through the king's truth that the prosperity of the tuath was maintained. It was the Druid's role to advise the king on how to maintain his connection with truth. This role was a primary one. A Druid lived in the king's household, advised him, and protected him from magical attack. Druids enjoyed a social status second only to the king and in fact spoke first in council. The Druid could also impose geasas on the king. Geasas could be limitations or expectations. They are sometimes described as taboos, though a taboo isn't an exact fit. A geasa could be something the king wasn't allowed to do or it might be something the king had to do. The Irish tales are awash in all sorts of destruction and chaos resulting from kings breaking their geasa and straying from truth.

It should be noted that the term translated from Irish into English as "truth" has meanings not found in its English equivalent. The term includes an association with the animating principal underlying all life, and has other associations like heat, redness and more.

Regarding morality and good behavior, the Druids did not scare the populace into line with visions of hell or threats of eternal damnation. They did possess the authority to exclude people from sacrifice. It is very difficult for our modern minds to understand the nature and importance of sacrifice to early societies. To be excluded from sacrifice was a grave condition putting one outside the tribe...a shunning of sorts. Without the protection of the tribe, survival was almost impossible.



The Druids preserved, through oral transmission, codes of behavior. Many were later codified into written law. The oral codes were expressed through wise sayings, maxim, triads and the like. Where they differed from Christian dogma was that they were not so much concerned with the salvation of the soul and were not "admonitory or imperative" (Binchy, 1981), but were concerned more with the health and well-being of the tuath. They were meant to "describe precedents rather than dictate practice" (Ireland, 1999).

In addition to excluding someone from sacrifice, a Druid could satirize a person who had committed a serious offence. A satire was, in effect, a powerful curse. There were strict laws in Ireland regulating the Druid's use of a satire. Up until as late as the 1600/1700s, a Filidh's (a group that evolved from earlier Druids in Ireland) praise poems and satires held the same moral force as the blessings and excommunications of the Christian clergy.

A Druid might also be called on to make judgments. While most legal matters were apparently settled by tribal leaders, particularly contentious or challenging issues might require the intervention of a Druid. Their training as religious specialists included many mantic techniques. They sometimes used these techniques to make judgments, find answers, or protect the tribe.

I could go on, but that should suffice as a primer.

## Inner Sight

By Celdwyn



## Winter Night

I entered out into the cold of the December night and found the stars alight with life and wonder. The trees heavy with snow and the ground crusty with frost. The late hour made the world hushed, high above the sounds of business and bustle. I found the silence of the Mother reaching to my soul, my spirit lifting to the Source. Quietly I entered that state of suchness that drew me closer to the Uncreated one and opened my senses to the guardians of the earthplane. Traveling in hooded warmth, feet protected against the harshness of cold, I heard the crunch of ice below my footfalls, I knew the sound was as old as time. Like the stars the seasons' endless turning grew within and I reached my hand out to touch the invisible beingness I sensed all about me. My imagination harked back to a time of Faerie, and time of well-springs and sacred hills, a time where the merest merging with the Source allowed a glimpse of the God or Goddess without. But now the magic loomed in my mind, only as a memory, a distant reflection of Self long passed into this age. Still I wandered forward, seeking the sense of Thou in the sacredness of now. Grey rocks blurred with moon-lit snow; tree shadows blended with hidden paths, each cast with the same sheen of luminescent blue, as if the Goddess were once again blessing the land and all the kingdoms. I turn, sense the horizon far out among the landscape, and I am once more spiraling inward towards that ineffable time of magic. Am I druid now? Or am I only remembering my time as a wise one? I do not know. Still...

I am aware that it is the fire rituals and the times of opening to the Otherworld that brought man to understand the magic of Divine renewal; the season coming and going; our souls opening to Spring and drawing in at Winter. Without the blessings of endless seasons, without the gifts of each human spirit coming to fruition, perhaps we would forget the majesty of suchness, the profundity of nature's generosity, the magic that is always about us. Winter is the drawing in, and the fire, represented by the Yule brings hope and promise of returning life, which is but another name for renewal. Without these times of reflection, would we seek to enrich our spirits as well? I for one, think not. Snow and ice, chilled rain and biting wind cause us to draw closer as a human village, allow us to come closer to the Source, so that we recognize the is-ness of creation and the gift of our own human life. But how long have I walked this path? How long will my soul seek the outward forms of the Great Dance before I close within the warm embrace of the Source's light? A good reflection for all of us who walk the ancient path. Be well in your renewal and in your new life!! Awyn.

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## Guidelines for Hospitals and Other Care Givers

### Care of Pagan Patients

By Ellen Evert Hopman, M.Ed.  
Druid Priestess, Order of the Whiteoak  
Amherst, MA

Author of *Tree Medicine-Tree Magic*, *A Druids Herbal*, *Being a Pagan* (with Larry Bond) and *Walking the World in Wonder-A Children's Herbal* plus various videos on the subjects of herbalism and Paganism.

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\* \* \*

Pagans regard death as part of the cycle of life, a natural occurrence. We may fear death but know that it happens to all; plants, trees, animals, people, stars, and planets eventually. There are no "rules" for the handling of deceased Pagans. Covens, Groves, and intimates of the deceased should be consulted as to their wishes. Recently Ellen Evert Hopman gave a presentation on Pagan patients for hospital chaplains at Baystate Hospital in Western Massachusetts with 60 plus people in attendance.

In Ellen's experience most chaplains know absolutely nothing about Paganism. The most shocking thing she said to them at the presentation was the belief that Pagan equals a Godless person is exactly the opposite of the truth. They all thought a Pagan was Godless. She explained that we as pagans honor all the Gods. They were blown away by that concept.

At the end of each section on Wiccans, Druids, and Pagans in general there a selection of poems and prayers that illustrate the nature of Paganism, help to show what Pagan piety looks and feels like, and for chaplains to use at the bedside. Recently a Witch friend of Ellen's recited the Charge of the Goddess to someone as the patient lay dying. The person died in her arms. As clergy we need to have prayers to say at the bedside.

Due to the length of the piece we have divided it up between the Yule and Oimelc issues of A Druid Missal-Any. However, it is really one document and is meant to be passed along to hospital chaplains in one piece.

\* \* \*

### Things that Pagan patients would like you to be aware of:

- 1) Pagans (may include Wiccans, Witches, Druids, Asatru, Heathens, etc.) are Polytheists. References to "God" meaning one single monotheistic deity could be offensive. The Goddess is as important to a Pagan as The God, or they may have a whole pantheon of deities they work with.
- 2) Pagans will appreciate your awareness of holy days such as New Moons, Full Moons and the major festivals.

### **The Major Pagan Holy Days**

Samhain (pronounced Sow-In) or Halloween, October 31/November 1

The Celtic New Year, a festival to honor the dead.

Winter Solstice December 21 or 22

The time of the longest night, also the shortest day of the year. A time to honor the dark and the dreamtime, as well as a celebration of the return of the light.

Imbolc or "Brigid" February 1/2

The festival of the Goddess Brigid, a triple Goddess of Healing, Smith-craft, and Poetry. A milk festival that celebrates the lactation of the ewes.

Spring Equinox or Ostara March 21/22

Originally a festival to honor the Germanic Goddess Eostre (from whose name we get the words East, Easter, Estrogen) Her symbols are the hare and the egg. A Fertility Goddess still honored by children today at "Easter".



Beltaine or May Day, May 1

The beginning of summer. A festival celebrated with May Poles, feasting and dancing.

Summer Solstice, Litha, June 21

The longest day of the year when the Sun is at its height. Also the shortest night. A day to honor the Sun.

Lammas/Lughnasad (pronounces Lah-mass or Loo-nah-sah) August 1

The festival of the First Fruits of the harvest cycle such as the new grain. The God Lugh inaugurated the festival in honor of his foster mother. A time for games, horseracing, hand fastings (marriages).

Fall Equinox/Mabon September 21/22

A day of equal light and dark, a celebration of balance and of the middle of the harvest.

3) Please be aware that their Coven, Grove or spiritual family may be closer to them than their biological family. They should be allowed visiting privileges and rights.

4) Pagans do not proselytize and regard it as rather rude to be proselytized to.

5) Pagans regard death as part of the cycle of life, a natural occurrence. We may fear death but know that it happens to all; plants, trees, animals, people, stars and planets, eventually. There are no "rules" for the handling of deceased Pagans. Covens, Groves, and intimates of the deceased should be consulted as to their wishes. Pagans as a rule believe in reincarnation.

6) Pagans regard the elements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air as sacred and may want symbols of these around them (in the same way that a Catholic might want an image of Mary or a Protestant might want a Cross to hold or look at). Pagans may be comforted by a dragon, salamander, red heart or candle to represent Fire, a feather or wing for Air, a stone or tree branch for Earth, a shell or bowl of water for Water, etc.

The Elements are not abstract symbols for Pagans.

Earth, Air, Fire and Water, are in and of themselves sacred.

7) Pagans may also want a statue or image of the Goddess/es or God/s they worship in their room.

8) The Pentacle is a common symbol for Pagans and Witches and has nothing to do with Satanism. The five pointed star represents Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit. For Wiccans the pentacle also represents the descent of Spirit to Earth/ humanity. Not all Pagans wear it, other symbols such as the Thor's Hammer, the Druid Triskelle and the Egyptian Ankh, etc. may be worn.



9) Paganism is an Earth-based Nature Religion, much like Native American and other indigenous religions. Pagans do not worship Satan. Pagans honor the seasons and the cycles of life. We also believe that there is Divine Spirit within all things; stones, animals, herbs, trees, birds, people.

10) Pagans believe in the "Law of Three", that is, a good deed will come back to the sender three times, as will an evil deed. This is basically a version of the Law of Karma. Pagans try hard not to hurt themselves or others.

11) Female and male clergy are equally honored and respected.

12) A Coven or Grove may wish to come into a patient's room to do healing work such as Reiki, laying on of hands, visualizations, healing with stones, and other non-traditional healing methods. The patient may request such assistance from their Priest, Priestess, Coven or Grove, or may ask for a Holistic Nurse to administer these healing modalities.

13) There are no food or dietary restrictions for Pagans. Each Pagan chooses her or his own diet; some are vegetarians, some are omnivores.

Excerpt from the Military Chaplains' Handbook (Pages 231-236) [page headers read "Wicca; Witchcraft" on odd numbered pages, "Religious Requirements and Practices" on even numbered pages.]

(Please note - The "Chaplains Handbook" went out of print in 1990. The out-of-print decision was purely monetary. With the expenses of Operation Desert Storm looming, the government could not justify a new edition. You can still find copies of that handbook on the web.)



## Wicca

**Address:** No central address. Wiccan worship groups, called covens, are essentially autonomous. Many, but far from all, have affiliated with:

Covenant of the Goddess  
P.O. Box 1226  
Berkeley, CA 94704

**Other Names by Which Known:** Witchcraft; Goddess worshippers; Neo-Paganism, Paganism, Norse (or any other ethnic designation) Paganism, Earth Religion, Old Religion, Druidism, Shamanism. Note: All of these groups have some basic similarities and many surface differences of expression with Wicca.

**Leadership:** No central leadership. The Covenant of the Goddess annually elects a First Officer and there is a constitutional limit of two consecutive terms, but in practice officers have almost always served for one year only. In 1991, there are two co-First Officers, Phoenix Whitebirch and Brandy Williams.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Because of the complete autonomy of covens, this cannot be determined. There are an estimated of 50,000 Wiccans in the United States.

**Historical Origin:** Wicca is a reconstruction of the Nature worship of tribal Europe, strongly influenced by the living Nature worship traditions of tribal peoples in other parts of the world. The works of such early twentieth century writers as Margaret Murray, Robert Graves and Gerald B. Gardner began the renewal of interest in the Old Religion. After the repeal of the anti-Witchcraft laws in Britain in 1951, Gardner publicly declared himself a Witch and began to gather a group of students and worshipers.

In 1962, two of his students Raymond and Rosemary Buckland (religious names: Lady Rowen and Robot), emigrated to the United States and began teaching Gardnerian Witchcraft here. At the same time, other groups of people became interested through reading books by Gardner and others. Many covens were spontaneously formed, using rituals created from a combination of research and individual inspiration. These self-created covens are today regarded as just as valid as those who can trace a "lineage" of teaching back to England.

In 1975, a very diverse group of covens who wanted to secure the legal protections and benefits of church status formed Covenant of the Goddess (CoG), which is incorporated in the State of California and recognized by the Internal Revenue Service. CoG does not represent all, or even a majority of Wiccans. A coven or an individual need not be affiliated with CoG in order to validly practice the religion. But CoG is the largest single public Wiccan organization, and it is cross-Traditional (i.e. non-denominational).

**Basic Beliefs:** Wiccans worship the sacred as immanent in Nature, often personified as Mother Earth and Father Sky. As polytheists, they may use many other names for Deity. Individuals will often choose Goddesses or Gods from any of the world's pantheons whose stories are particularly inspiring and use those Deities as a focus for personal devotions. Similarly, covens will use particular Deity names as a group focus, and these are often held secret by the groups.

It is very important to be aware that Wiccans do not in any way worship or believe in "Satan," "the Devil," or any similar entities. They point out that "Satan" is a symbol of rebellion against and inversion of the Christian and Jewish traditions. Wiccans do not revile the Bible. They simply regard it as one among many of the world's mythic systems, less applicable than some to their core values, but still deserving just as much respect as any of the others.

Most Wiccan groups also practice magic, by which they mean the direction and use of "psychic energy," those natural but invisible forces which surround all living things. Some members spell the word "magick," to distinguish it from sleight of hand entertainments. Wiccans employ such means as dance, chant, creative visualization and hypnosis to focus and direct psychic energy for the purpose of healing, protecting and aiding members in various endeavors. Such assistance is also extended to non- members upon request.

Many, but not all, Wiccans believe in reincarnation. Some take this as a literal description of what happens to people when they die. For others, it is a symbolic model that helps them deal with the cycles and changes within this life. Neither Reincarnation nor any other literal belief can be used as a test of an individual's validity as a member of the Old Religion.

Most groups have a handwritten collection of rituals and lore, known as a Book of Shadows. Part of the religious education of a new member will be to hand copy this book for him or herself. Over the years, as inspiration provides, new material will be added. Normally, access to these books is limited to initiated members of the religion.

**Practices and Behavioral Standards:** The core ethical statement of Wicca, called the "Wiccan Rede" states "an it harm none, do what you will." The Rede fulfills the same function as does the "Golden Rule" for Jews and Christians; all other ethical teachings are considered to be elaborations and applications of the Rede. It is a statement of situational ethics, emphasizing at once the individual's responsibility to avoid harm to others and the widest range of personal autonomy in "victimless" activities. Wicca has been described as having a "high-choice" ethic.

Because of the basic Nature orientation of the religion, many Wiccans will regard all living things as Sacred, and to show a special concern for ecological issues. For this reason, individual conscience will lead some to take a pacifist position. Some are vegetarians. Others will feel that, as Nature's Way includes self-defense, they should participate in wars that they conscientiously consider to be just. The religion does not dictate either position, but requires each member to thoughtfully and meditatively examine her or his own conscience and to live by it.



Social forces generally do not yet allow Witches to publicly declare their religious faith without fear of reprisals such as loss of job, child-custody challenges, ridicule, etc. Prejudice against Wiccans is the result of public confusion between Witchcraft and Satanism. Wiccans in the military, especially those who may be posted in countries perceived to be particularly intolerant, will often have their dogtags read "No Religious Preference." Concealment is a traditional Wiccan defense against persecution, so non-denominational dogtags should not contravene a member's request for religious services.

Wiccans celebrate eight festivals, called "Sabbats," as a means of attunement to the seasonal rhythms of

Nature. These are January 31 (Called Oimelc, Brigit, or February Eve), March 21 (Ostara or Spring Equinox), April 30 (Beltane or May Eve), June 22 (Midsummer, Litha or Summer Solstice), July 31 (Lunasa or Lammás), September 21 (Harvest, Mabon or Autumn Equinox), October 31 (Samhain, Sowyn or Hallows), and December 21 (Yule or Winter Solstice.) Some groups find meetings within a few days of those dates to be acceptable, others require the precise date. In addition, most groups will meet for worship at each Full Moon, and many will also meet on the New Moon. Meetings for religious study will often be scheduled at any time convenient to the members, and rituals can be scheduled whenever there is a need (i.e. for a healing).

Ritual jewelry is particularly important to many Wiccans. In addition to being a symbol of religious dedication, these talismans are often blessed by the coven back home and felt to carry the coven's protective and healing energy.

**Organizational Structure:** Most Wiccans meet with a coven, a small group of people. Each coven is autonomous. Most are headed by a High Priestess, often with the assistance of a High Priest. Some are headed by a High Priestess or High Priest without a partner, and some regard themselves as a gathering of equals. Covens can be of mixed gender, or all female or male, depending on the preferences of the members. Every initiate is considered to be a priestess or a priest. Most covens are small. Thirteen is the traditional maximum number of members, although not an absolute limit. At that size covens form a close bond, so Wiccans in the military are likely to maintain a strong affiliation with their covens back home.

There are many distinct "Traditions" of Wicca, just as there are many denominations within Christianity. The spectrum of Wiccan practice can be described as ranging from "traditional" to "eclectic," with Traditions, covens and individuals fitting anywhere within that range. A typical difference would be that more traditional groups would tend to follow a set liturgy, whereas eclectic groups would emphasize immediate inspiration in worship.

These distinctions are not particularly important to the military chaplain, since it is unlikely that enough members of any one Tradition would be at the same base. Worship circles at military facilities are likely to be ad-hoc cross-Traditional groups, working out compromise styles of worship for themselves and constantly adapting them to a changing membership. Therefore, the lack of strict adherence to the patterns of any one Tradition is not an indicator of invalidity.

While many Wiccans meet in a coven, there are also a number of solitaires. These are individuals who choose to practice their faith alone. They may have been initiated in a coven or self initiated. They will join with other Wiccans to celebrate the festivals or to attend the various regional events organized by the larger community.

**Role of Ministers:** Within a traditional coven, the High Priestess, usually assisted by her High Priest, serves both as leader in the rituals and as teacher and counselor for coven members and unaffiliated Pagans. Eclectic covens tend to share leadership more equally.

**Worship:** Wiccans usually worship in groups. Individuals who are currently not affiliated with a coven, or are away from their home coven, may choose to worship privately or may form ad-hoc groups to mark religious occasions. Non-participating observers are not generally welcome at Wiccan rituals.

Some, but not all, Wiccan covens worship in the nude ("skyclad") as a sign of attunement with Nature. Most, but not all, Wiccan covens bless and share a cup of wine as part of the ritual. Almost all Wiccans use an individual ritual knife (an "athame" to focus and direct personal energy. Covens often also have ritual swords to direct the energy of the group. These tools, like all other ritual tools, are highly personal and should never leave the possession of the owner.

Other commonly used ritual tools include a bowl of water, a bowl of salt, a censer with incense, a disk with



symbols engraved on it (a "pentacle"), statues or artwork representing the Goddess and God, and candles. Most groups will bless and share bread or cookies along with the wine. All of these items are used in individual, private worship as well as in congregate rituals.

**Dietary Laws or Restrictions:** None.

**FUNERAL and BURIAL REQUIREMENTS:** None. Recognition of the death of a member takes place within the coven, apart from the body of the deceased. Ritual tools, materials, or writings found among the effects of the deceased should be returned to their home coven (typically a member will designate a person to whom ritual materials should be sent).

It is desirable for a Wiccan priest or priestess to be present at the time of death, but not strictly necessary. If not possible, the best assistance would be to make the member as comfortable as possible, listen to whatever they have to say, honor any possible requests, and otherwise leave them as quiet and private as possible.

**Medical Treatment:** No medical restrictions. Wiccans generally believe in the efficacy of spiritual or psychic healing when done in tandem with standard medical treatment. Therefore, at the request of the patient, other Wiccan personnel should be allowed visiting privileges as though they were immediate family, including access to Intensive Care Units. Most Wiccans believe that healing energy can be sent from great distances, so, if possible, in the case of any serious medical condition, the member's home coven should be notified.

**Other:** With respect to attitude toward military service, Wiccans range from career military personnel to conscientious objectors.

Wiccans do not proselytize and generally resent those who do. They believe that no one Path to the Sacred is right for all people, and see their own religious pattern as only one among many that are equally worthy. Wiccans respect all religions that foster honor and compassion in their adherents, and expect the same respect. Members are encouraged to learn about all faiths, and are permitted to attend the services of other religions, should they desire to do so.

**General Source Books:** The best general surveys of the Wiccan and neo-Pagan movement are:

Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon*: New York: Penguin, 1997.

Hopman, Ellen Evert, and L. Bond. *Being A Pagan*: Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2002.

For more specific information about eclectic Wicca, see:

Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess: 20th Anniversary Edition*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

For more specific information about traditional Wicca, see:

Farrar, Janet, and Stewart Farrar. *Eight Sabbats for Witches*. London: Robert Hale, 1981. 192pp.  
*The Witches' Way*. London: Robert Hale, 1984. 394pp.

Because of the autonomy of each coven and the wide variance of specific ritual practices, the best contact person would be the High Priestess or other leader of the member's home coven.

You will find the Military Chaplain's Handbook on line at:



<http://www.milpagan.org/wwwboard/messages/1/102.html?1117036154>

For more information on military Pagans please see the following; Military Pagan Network, Inc  
<http://www.milpagan.org> and [info@milpagan.org](mailto:info@milpagan.org) Pagan Military Newsletter  
[Newsletter@milpagan.org](mailto:Newsletter@milpagan.org)

(Please note: the above Pagan military organizations are not affiliated with The Covenant of the Goddess)



## **New Version of the Mabinogi Available!**

Annwyl cyfeillion / Dear friends,

I am writing to let you know that my new illustrated translation of The Mabinogi (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2006) is now available in the United States and can be ordered (\$35.00) from Hiraeth Celtic Goods at [www.hiraethcelticgoods.com](http://www.hiraethcelticgoods.com) or from

Hiraeth Celtic Goods  
77 Cranberry Drive  
Duxbury, Massachusetts 02332-4106

Telephone : 781 585 6592 Fax : 781 585 6054  
[orders@hiraethcelticgoods.com](mailto:orders@hiraethcelticgoods.com)

Discounts are available for class adoptions and bulk orders. Outside the US, it can be obtained from the press at [www.gomer.co.uk](http://www.gomer.co.uk).

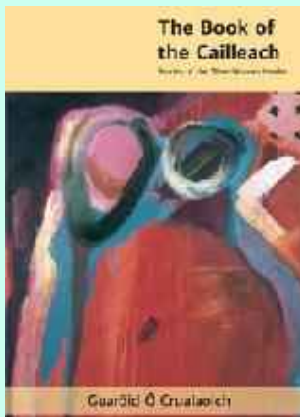
I am also available to give a reading, talk, slide show, and/or lecture about The Mabinogi to groups, organizations, or classes that would be interested. I can be contacted at [jkbollard@gmail.com](mailto:jkbollard@gmail.com) or at 413-584-2752. Even after 40 years of study, preparing this translation and selecting 60 from about 800 of Anthony Griffith's photographs has given me a deeper understanding of The Mabinogi and its place in the Welsh geographical and literary landscape and in the broader context of European literary history.

I hope you will enjoy it -- and if I may say so, it should make a beautiful gift and an intriguing addition to anyone's coffee table.

Cofion cynnes / Best wishes,  
John Bollard

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**The Book of the Cailleach:**



## Stories of the Wise-Woman Healer

By Gearoid O'Crualaich (Trade Paperback; 30 Euro / 37 USD / 24 UK; 300 pages)

This volume presents an analysis of the "wise woman healer" from the oral traditions of Ireland's rural communities. Stories, told and retold, embedded in the texture of culture and community, collected and studied for many decades, are here translated and made available to the general reader. The figure of the "wise woman", the "hag", the Cailleach, or the "Red Woman" are part of an oral tradition which has its roots in pre-Christian Ireland. In the hands of Gearoid O'Crualaich these figures are subtly explored to reveal how they offered a complex understanding of the world, of human psychology and its predicaments. The thematic structure of the book brings to the fore universal themes such as death, marriage, childbirth and healing, and invites the reader to see the contemporary relevance of the stories for themselves.



## Irish Wild Plants: Myths, Legends and Folklore

By Niall Mac Coitir (Hardback; 25 Euro / 32 USD / 18 UK; 376 pages, with black-and-white line drawings throughout)

The wild plants of Ireland have been bound up in our culture and folklore from the earliest times. They appear in the ancient Irish brehon laws and early nature poetry for which Ireland is famous. Herbal medicine was also important. In ancient Ireland, it was believed there were 365 different parts to the body, and a different plant existed to cure the ailments of each part. So, it is no surprise to find there are many myths and legends and much folklore associated with many wild plants and flowers in Ireland. A person who carries a four-leaved shamrock will have great luck in gambling, while a girl who puts nine ivy-leaves under her pillow will dream of her future husband. Plants are described in seasonal order instead of botanically, a fresh perspective that in many ways brings us back to the viewpoint of our ancestors. After describing the history of herbs in Ireland and traditional herbal medicine, different aspects of plant folklore are examined. Included are their roles in magical protection, their use in charms and spells (especially for love!), plants as emblems in children's games, in Irish place names and folklore cures. As with its companion "Irish Trees - Myths, Legends and Folklore", this book is beautifully illustrated with specially commissioned watercolours by Grania Langrishe.

Both these books are available from Read Ireland Bookshop:

Gregory Carr, Independent Bookseller  
Read Ireland  
392 Clontarf Road,  
Clontarf, Dublin 3, Ireland  
Tel & Fax: +353-1-853-2063  
Please send email orders to [greg@readireland.ie](mailto:greg@readireland.ie)



## Trees Worth Hugging



San Francisco Chronicle  
Monday, November 27, 2006  
Editorial

THE Friends of the Urban Forest aims at two challenges. First, it wants to plant more trees along San Francisco's windy, lifeless sidewalks.

But, secondly, it wants the neighbors along these blocks to work together to do the shoveling and gardening as a community.

After 25 years of work, there are 40,000 growing trees to prove the first goal, a number that tops the tree count in the Golden Gate Park. Its leaders believe the second task of forging stronger neighborhood ties is just as successful.

This city basks in its environmentalism. But, strangely, trees are in short supply compared to other cities.

Its 25th anniversary marks a milestone that should inspire tree-less residents to consider a leafy upgrade. Friends of the Urban Forest provides suitable choices, tips on maintaining young saplings, and technical help. But it's up to neighbors to get together and do most of the work themselves. To learn more, contact the group at [www.fuf.net](http://www.fuf.net).

There's no part of town that couldn't use more trees, from breezy Ocean Beach to the palmy Mission. San Francisco should be dotted with arboreal life, and one group is working hard to make it happen.



## Point Reyes Nonnative Deer Population to be Reduced by Contraceptives, Culling

Glen Martin, Chronicle Environment Writer  
Saturday, December 9, 2006

After years of dispute, a plan to eliminate nonnative deer from Point Reyes National Seashore has been finalized, with removal of the animals expected to begin next year.

Officials plan to rid the area of deer by shooting some and injecting others with contraceptives. The plan, approved by the National Park Service's regional director earlier this year, was published last week in the Federal Register.

While the axis deer from India and fallow deer from Asia Minor have long delighted visitors to the park, they have bedeviled the service's wildlife biologists.

They are handsome creatures -- fallow deer have large antlers and range in color from dark brown to white, while axis deer have spotted coats. But the animals compete with native black-tailed deer and tule elk for forage and territory.

Currently, there are about 1,000 fallow deer and at least 250 axis deer in the park, said John Dell'Osso, a park spokesman.

Wildlife officials think there might be 500 more black-tailed deer at the park were it not for competition with the nonnative species, he said.

Biologists also believe the nonnative deer trample riverside and woodland habitats because they congregate in large herds. They're also vectors for paratuberculosis, a disease that sickens hoofed animals. A local rancher imported the exotic deer to the Point Reyes seashore in the 1940s before it became part of the national park system. Originally, 28 fallow deer and eight axis deer were brought from the San Francisco Zoo. They rapidly multiplied and were game for local hunters.

When the park incorporated in 1962, the deer transformed from an asset to a liability. Nonnative -- or "exotic" -- animals generally are considered anathema for national parks, and the service has long wrestled with a control policy at Point Reyes.

Efforts to control the fallow and axis deer populations through lethal culling were pursued from 1976 to 1994, but were abandoned in the wake of budgetary shortfalls and local opposition.

Along with the new plan, the service considered four other alternatives: total elimination by killing them; reducing the herds to 350 animals per species through a combination of lethal culling and contraception; reducing to 350 animals for each species by lethal culling alone; and doing nothing.

Dell'Osso said contraceptive chemicals alone were not considered a sound alternative because the efficacy of available drugs is not certain and the expense is high.

"We would only treat females, and it would cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 an animal," he said.

Dell'Osso said removal operations probably will begin next year but it may be a long time before the last exotic deer are gone from the park because they can live up to 20 years. Some of the does treated with contraceptives could still be alive 15 years from now, Dell'Osso said.

"But most of the project both lethal culling and contraception will be accomplished within three or four years," he said.

The killed deer will not be wasted, Dell'Osso said.

"We've already had inquiries from food banks that want the meat because high-quality (meat) is hard for those programs to come by," he said. "Some folks in the California Condor Recovery Program also want some of the carcasses. They usually use stillborn calves for condor feeding stations but they're in short supply."

American Indians have also requested some white fallow deer hides, Dell'Osso said. White deerskins are used in religious ceremonies by some California tribes.

Opponents of the plan still hope to block it.

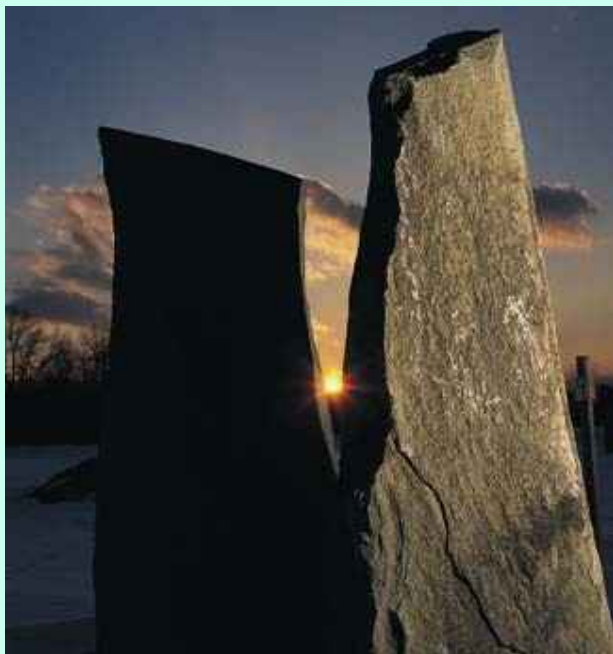
Capt. Cindy Machado of the Marin Humane Society said the service should opt for a wholly contraceptive

approach to reducing the park's exotic deer.

"It has been done on everything from elk to elephants, and it could be done here," she said. "This is Marin, and people here are very concerned about animal suffering -- and with lethal removal, there'll be a great deal of suffering."

She said that during the cull efforts in the 1980s, the Humane Society handled many calls on wounded animals.

"We don't want to go through that again," she said.



## **Winter Solstice 2006 Sunrise and Sunset Gatherings at the U.Mass. Sunwheel:**

Thursday and Friday Dec. 21 & 22, 2006  
7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Both Days

You are invited to witness the passing of the seasons by joining Dr. Judith Young of the U.Mass. Dept. of Astronomy to watch the Sun rise and set over the tall standing stones in the U.Mass. Sunwheel for the WINTER SOLSTICE of 2006. The sunrise and sunset events will be held on BOTH THURSDAY and FRIDAY, Dec. 21 and 22, 2006. This is when the Sun is at its most southerly position rising and setting for all observers on Earth. Visitors for the sunrise viewing should arrive at 7:00 a.m., and visitors for the sunset viewing should arrive at 3:30 p.m.

For those interested in learning about the sky, there will be a presentation which will include the significance of the solstices, the cause of the seasons, the changes in the Sun's position in the sky during the year, the phases of the Moon, and the story of building the Sunwheel. There will also be an explanation of the Moon's 18.6-year cycle, since 2006 is the peak of this cycle, also called the Major Lunar Standstill. Weather permitting, we may be able to spot the waxing crescent Moon at sunset on Dec. 21 and 22 near the southernmost declination ([click here for Moon watching information](#)). Bring your questions, your curiosity, dress VERY WARMLY; the gatherings typically last an hour.

A \$3 donation is requested to help with the cost of stone pathworks and exhibit expansion which are planned for the Sunwheel. Sunwheel T-shirts & sweatshirts will also be available for purchase.

The instant of the winter solstice is 2:22 p.m. EST on Dec. 21. The word solstice means 'standstill of the Sun', and refers to the fact that the observed rising and setting location of the Sun stays relatively fixed on the

horizon for almost two weeks around solstice, with December 21 in the middle. Stated another way, the Sun's Declination (latitude on the sky) changes very little from the week before through the week after December 21. The astronomical origin of the Sun's apparent 'standstill' is one of the topics which will be explained during the Sunwheel gathering.

The UMass Sunwheel is located south of McGuirk Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road. The Sunwheel can easily be reached from the center of Amherst, following Amity St. to the west, on the right hand side of the road about 1/4 mile after crossing University Drive. The gatherings are held in all types of weather except rain. In the event of rain, visitors are encouraged to visit the Sunwheel on their own at any time.

A project conceived by Dr. Judith S. Young  
Professor of Astronomy, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
e-mail: Judith Young at [young@astro.umass.edu](mailto:young@astro.umass.edu)



## **Irish Conference of Medievalists and Summer Schools in Old Irish June/July 2007**

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Thursday to Saturday  
28th - 30th June 2007

Chairman: M?re Herbert; Organising Secretary: Catherine Swift

Committee: Anders Ahlqvist, Caoimh? Breatnach, Liam Breatnach, Tom? ?Cathasaigh, D?bh??Cr?n?, Ruairi ?hUiginn, Thomas O'Loughlin, Katherine Simms

**CALL FOR PAPERS:** Papers are invited on medieval archaeology, art, history, language and literature (Latin and the vernaculars). Length of papers: 45minutes (15 minutes discussion) or 20 minutes (10 minutes discussion).

**NB!** As 2007 marks the existence of the Irish Conference of Medievalists for twenty years, it was decided at this year's AGM to make a special appeal for papers which deal with the nature of Irish medieval studies as an academic field of study: the way it has changed since the inception of the conference and its potential for development and expansion into the future. To emphasize that this represents a wish to look forward, as well as looking back, the conference this year is in a new venue, Mary Immaculate College, in Limerick.

Send details of proposed papers by e-mail - at the latest by 28 February 2007

to Dr Catherine Swift  
Director of Irish Studies  
Mary Immaculate College  
University of Limerick  
TEL: (353 61) 204300  
FAX: (353 61) 313632  
E-mail: [Catherine.Swift@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Catherine.Swift@mic.ul.ie)

Details of fees for registration, meals and accommodation will be circulated, together with the Conference

programme, in March 2007. Details of transport links, by air, rail and road will also be provided. Those needing information in advance in order to apply to their institutions for funding should contact the Organising Secretary, Dr Catherine Swift, for a provisional estimate of costs.

PLEASE POST A COPY OF THIS NOTICE IN YOUR INSTITUTION

Summer Schools in Old Irish

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick  
June-July 2007

The aim of the summer schools is to facilitate students who wish to improve their knowledge of Old Irish but who are not in a position to sign up for full year courses. Each course involves 60 hours contact time, spread over 10 days and there are three levels: Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. Students opting for the Intermediate and Advanced options will be asked to take a short test at the beginning of the course so as to identify the best stream for their needs.

Beginners Course: Wednesday 13th June - Saturday 23rd June

The Beginners course is for those students with little or no previous knowledge of Old Irish to the basic grammatical structure of the language and some essential vocabulary. It will also provide students with an opportunity of translating a variety of Old Irish texts, concentrating on those which have historical implications. Experience in learning at least one language other than one's mother tongue would be helpful but is not essential.

The Beginner's course is designed around the Old Irish Workbook by E.G. Quin. Further grammatical notes, texts for translation and vocabulary lists will be provided to students.

The teaching schedule for the ten days will be as follows:

9:30 - 10:30 Class  
10:30-11:00 - Coffee Break  
11:00 - 12:00 Class  
12:00 - 1:00 - Grammar exercises  
1:00-2:30 Lunch  
2:30 - 3:30 Class  
3:30-4:00 - Coffee Break  
4:00 - 5:00 Class  
5:00-6:00 - Translation exercises

Intermediate and Advanced: Monday 9th July - Friday 20th July

The Intermediate course will cover the second half of Quin's Old Irish Workbook and will also involve reading the law-text *Uraicecht na R?r*, dealing with the status and functions of the *filid* or learned poets in Early Ireland.

The Advanced course will cover an introduction to Middle Irish grammar as well as reading extracts from a variety of Old and Middle Irish texts such as *Bethu Ph?raig*, *Fingal Ron?n* and *Cr?h Gablach*.

The teaching schedule will be as for the Beginners' Summer School.

Accommodation is provided in the Courtbrack Accommodation Centre, on Limerick's Dock Road, adjacent



to Mary Immaculate College and just a short walk away from the city centre. Single rooms have been booked at a discounted rate of 25 euros per day although twin rooms are available for those who would like to request them. As well as all the usual amenities, there is use of the self-catering kitchens and common room, free car parking and provision of a light Continental breakfast. For those who do not want to do their own catering, there are two pubs offering meals, a hotel and three take-aways within five minutes walk.

Cost of course in Old Irish: 300 euros/ £210 sterling / \$390 USA / \$500 Aus.

Cost of accommodation: 250 euros /£175 sterling /\$330 USA / \$ 420 Aus.

Students wishing to register for the Summer School are asked to send cheques to Dr Catherine Swift Director of Irish Studies, Mary Immaculate College Limerick by the 19th May 2006. Queries will be answered via the email address: [Catherine.Swift@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Catherine.Swift@mic.ul.ie)



Yule, Midwinter Solstice, will take place on Thursday, December 21st at 4:23 p.m. Pacific Standard time. Due to its members' work schedules, Poison Oak Grove will be having its Yule service and Social on Sunday, December 17th.

A Druid 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 to:

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Canyon, CA 94516

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E-Mail: [poppinjay@earthlink.net](mailto:poppinjay@earthlink.net)

This is the end of the Yule issue



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