

A DRUID MISSAL-ANY

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amhain, Celtic New Years, the Day-between the Worlds...The Druidic year starts on Samhain, in the fall of the year, just as the Druidic day begins with the going down of the Sun. Samhain marks the end of the harvest which began at Lughnasadh. All fruit not gathered in by Samhain Eve must be left in the fields to feed the birds, the wild animals, and the Sidhi. The Pukas, mischievous spirits, will come for it, to steal its nourishing essence and leave the husk, or to despoil it, if it is not to their liking. Their mythic descendents swarm out in the form of myriad "Trick-or-Treaters."

Like New Years' celebration all over the world, Samhain festivities fall into two sequential phases: one that signifies the return to Chaos, and involves the disposal of old goods, potlatches, parties, suspension of taboos, return of the dead, and the mixing of the two Worlds, in Past and Future; and a second whose theme is the rebirth of Order and Cosmos, of creating anew, of preparations, and of the rites of Samhain Morning. (As we are not an official, organized Grove, here in Orinda, but a gathering of Solitary Third Order Druids, First Orders, and friends, the election that would ordinarily be held for officers in an R.D.N.A. Grove will not need to be held. Isn't it a relief!?)

The beliefs involving the return of the dead on Samhain Night are based on the Pan-European traditions of Samhain as the time when the Other World is closest to this one, and when, therefore, doors, passages, may open between the two. In Celtic myths these gateways were usually located at the Sidhi Mounds, the megalithic tombs of the Celts' Pre-Indo-European predecessors. But ways were also said to exist through sacred lakes and springs, and through caves in the crags. These doorways admitted passage in both directions. On special days, mortal heroes or heroines crossed to the Other World on quests, adventures or to obtain prophetic knowledge. Throughout Eur-Asia, the dead, who exist beyond time, are believed to know the future as well as everything that has happened in the past. Dead ancestors could help a favored descendent with this knowledge, or send health and prosperity, but first the petitioner must be in perfect estate, having broken no Geas, nor taboo, nor have incurred the censor of any Deity or Sidhi. In addition, the seeker must be in the good graces of the ancestor whose help is needed. Health or disease were from the ancestors in the Celtic Cosmos; to live well one had to be on good terms with the dead and with one's past. The past becomes present again on Samhain, between the years. All oblations and funeral rites due the ancestors must have been offered, and all debts of this World paid, if the traveler is to step lightly between the Worlds. If all was not in perfect order, the quester might become trapped or the ancestors could send disease and misfortune when the passage opened. Or the wronged dead could pass into this World, and walk in the time between the years, seeking revenge.

The concept of going to the Other World for help from disease or to secure prophetic knowledge is found in several different European Samhain traditions, as well as among the Celts, is probably cognate with, descended from the Other World journeys of the Paleolithic Eurasian shamans. Similar, but more complex and complete traditions and epics have been preserved among the Siberian shamanic religions. There, going to the Other World(s) and returning to one's mortal body are usually the privilege of the clergy, i.e. initiate shamans. But in Europe, on Samhain, the Other World is very close, in Celtic verse, just a mist apart. On this night, there is no treacherous journey through intermediate kingdoms or being-states. Tonight a mortal, albeit a hero or a heroine, could make the leap.

R.D.N.A members hold all night vigils, beginning with a bonfire at dusk when the first of the two Samhain services is held. All opened bottles of spirits must be finished by dawn, and there will be, then, no more fermented spirits in the Grove chalice until Beltaine. Plates of food and offerings should be set out, just beyond the firelight, for the souls of friends who have died in the past year. They may be invited to join the festivities.

At dawn the second Samhain service is held. All remaining liquor is sacrificed in the fire, and the Third Order Druids exchange their red ribbons and ornaments for the white of the Season of Sleep. There is pure water in the Chalice. The new year has begun.

In preparation, all debts should be paid, or arrangements for them brought into harmony. All rites due to the dead, and the past, should have been performed, and all obligations to the living brought current. Then enter the Time-Between-the-Worlds “without burden, without geas, without malice.” Pleasant journeys!

—Emmon Bodfish, reprinted from “A Druid Missal-Any” Samhain 1986

NEWS OF THE GROVES

Carleton Grove: News from Minnesota

The grove here at Carleton fares as well as ever. While the population is perhaps not quite as high as we’d like it to be (and in fact hovers around the “VERY SMALL” department), our activities have been interesting and we all have bonded admirably over the Autumnal Equinox, responding to letters asking for spiritual guidance from prisoners, attacking buckthorn and other invasive species in the Carleton College school arboretum, thus allowing for a return of the indigenous species, and just philosophizing over pistachio nuts, apple cider, and loaves of homemade bread. We hope to advertise Samhain a little better, but I am a bit unsure as to what to do to carry out such a ceremony, so I am not positive if I should let any new initiates know that or see that, and perhaps should just stick to my little group that I have. What sayest thou?

Walk with nature,

Daniel

Mango Mission: News from South East Asia

The monks are out of the Buddhist Lenten three-month lock up in their temples, and the town is having a party like Easter-time in small town America. I watched the dragon boat races, mysterious balls of fire were emitted by the rivergods at night, and people floated banana-tree-pulp boats with candles in thanks in the evening. Little embassy kids came by the houses, and my son had his first trick or treating, but of course, I kept the candy. I’m off to Egypt for early November for some job training; I’ll send pyramid shots to you all when I get back. End of the year, wish I could have done more Druidic things with you folks online and some vigils, but only so much can be done with a new child and new job. I hope for more time as my job and child grow.

Hemlock Splinters Grove: News from New York

Hi Stacey,

Hemlock Splinters is not exactly defunct, but I am largely a solitary druid these days. We have moved to a new address.

I have finally started medical school at SUNY Upstate, and finding too little time for sleeping and eating, let alone recruiting grove members. It is hard to be an active druid just now, but the lessons I learned from nature stay with me. If you have any advice on how to be a good doctor druid, pass it on.

Irony

Grove of Branwyn: News from Southwest Georgia

Hey Guys,

How are you all doing? Just reporting in and letting you know how things are going. We had a good festival for the Fall Equinox. There were three of our four regular members there, plus four others. We had a ritual first, then a pot-luck supper after. It was alot of fun, and there was fellowship to be had by all!

We were planning on repeating the same for Samhain but we’re having problems. We had the last feast at the home of one of our bard’s family, and the week of Samhain she’s got company coming over, so her house will be full. We

still plan on having a meal together at a local restaurant, even though we won't be able to have a ritual beforehand. We do plan on having a great feast and ritual for Yuletide though, or at least we hope to anyway.

The initial response we got from the surrounding neo-pagan community has waned a bit since our conception in August. We "officially" have 11 members (+2 family), but so far only 4 are active (including myself and my wife). We also have several "interested" persons who won't commit to joining up right now. This is not unexpected since our county is about 98% Christian, mostly fundamentalist Baptist. But we are hanging in there, and we will not give up and become just another statistic.

Pray for us please, and may the goddess Branwen love and protect you as well.

Yours in the Earth-Mother,

Sean

Palm Grove: News from Florida

As the Sun God Prepares to sleep and the Moon Goddess of the night takes her place in the sky The Palm*Grove does not sleep at all. For it is sunny and warm here in Florida, and there is much to do.

Many of our members are out making their own way in the magical and mundane world. Struggling with the day to day operations of life. And ever striving for a more enlightened view, and their place in the cosmos. Some have left the area and some have left the grove, but as one leaves another will enter, as is the way of the RDNA.

I am beginning to replant an indoor starter set of herbs that should be ready for replanting outdoors by the next Beltane. As our Sun and Heat Banes have a tendency to destroy our crops. I am planting many types of Magico-Religico plants this year and I am delving more into the alchemical nature of the world than the strictly spiritual-energy aspect of magic and spirituality.

I am also working quite a lot with the Shidhee and the other fairy folk on a personal and business level. I have made many fairy pathways in my grove yard, and doors and playgrounds for them to enjoy. I am also working with creating fairy doors and homes for them, both for myself, the grove, and eventually for sale to others.

For I believe that if you befriend the Fairy folk and let them know they are welcome in your home and life then they will come bearing gifts and blessings upon you.

As a grove we have begun to part more and more from the Ritual and ceremonial aspects and started to work more as a group to learn and practice and share information that we have learned along the way. Dealing more with Nature and the natural order of the world and life, and less on trying to please the gods with ritual, and controlling life with magic.

Well that is about all for now. I hope that all the peoples of the RDNA have an excellent Samhain and a great Dark half of the year. Do not fret for the Sun God will return after His slumber and the world will turn green once again.

Enjoy all,

Darmock of the Palm*Grove

Swamp Grove: News from South Florida

The Grove begins to awaken after its summer hibernation. Our cycles seem opposite most others, we have a very hot and wet season down here close to the everglades and look forward to cooler weather. Our Outside activities such as drumming and circling start near the end of October, some of us are attending a healing circle before that, but the Samhain festival is the real start. Let all our fellow Pagan travelers be well this season.

Dravidia Grove: News from Indiana

Hello all sorry for not writing as of late. Been extremely busy. Moving, and an illness with my wife. The Grove is well, am getting ready for Samhain. My sister in Md and I in Indiana are both doing a solo ordeal this year. Neither of us really have the time for anything big. I have began writing a book on ceremonies, and ritual magick that will probably be done in a year or so. The research for it is going extremely slowly so it may even take longer. It is funny considering the resources I have that it should be slow. I have over 200 personal books on Wicca, and over 700 texts that i have in my virtual library. Too much info for a quick review.

Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News from Minnesota

Seasonal Salutations Siblings!

Ahh, the season of sleep. Still two weeks away, but I'm soooo ready for it.

I have an update on Agaawaatase (He Casts A Shadow Flying), the little house sparrow I rescued and took to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Roseville. Not only did the little guy pull through, but he made a great recovery and has already been released back into the wild.

I've been thumbing my nose at all the nay-sayers ever since.

Hopefully we will be blessed with many future generations of his bloodline.

In other news, I'm going to be out of commission for a good chunk of the season. I'm having surgery on my ankle on Oct 22. Too many sprained ankles over the years have left me with two bad hooves. I'm having my anterior talofibular ligament and my peroneal tendons repaired on my right ankle. The ATL is severed, and the peroneals (which should be nice and tight like rubberbands) are like overcooked spaghetti. I have to spend the first 10-days post-op flat on my back with my ankle elevated above my heart for 23 hours a day...yes, that leaves me an hour a day to spend in the bathroom and cooking food for myself. They'll have to keep me sedated just to keep me sane. I'll be in a cast for a month, then a walking cast for another month, then two months of physical therapy. Then next year, I get to do it all over again on the left ankle. Goody for me...

In Native American news, my people lost a true warrior this last week. Vernon Bellecourt, a member of Minnesota's White Earth Band of Ojibwe, passed away at the age of 75. Vernon was a longtime leader in the American Indian Movement (AIM) following the showdown at the Pine Ridge Reservation (in South Dakota) with the FBI in the 1970s. He was also a negotiator in AIM's 1972 occupation of BIA's headquarters in Washington during the Trail Of Broken Treaties campaign. More recently, he was very active in the fight against American Indian nicknames for sports teams, and was the president of the National Coalition On Racism In Sports And Media. Vernon, whose Ojibwe name, WaBun-Inini (which means Man Of Dawn), will be missed by many. Rest in peace, Vernon. You walked the Red Road in beauty, and you blessed us all. Hoka-hey.

Until next time siblings,

Gigawabamin nagutch,
and yours in the Mother,

—Julie Ann and Lou—

Clan of the Triplehorses: News from Oregon

To find out what's up with Clan of the Triplehorses, check out our live journal at: <http://triplehorses.livejournal.com/>

Samhain blessings to all~!

Sierra Madrone Grove: News from California

The Sierra Madrone Grove has been busy. We just finished up with the Eight Winds Gathering up in Oregon. It was co-sponsored by the Clan of the Triple Horses. There were well over 20 people in attendance and there were four workshops held. A Second Order Ordination Ritual was performed for Aigeann's husband, R, in front of ADF Arch-Druid Skip Ellison and ADF Vice-ArchDruid Kirk Thomas. Very cool indeed!

Our Grove is hosting our Annual Samhuinn event on November 3rd, and we expect around 30 people to attend. I'm looking forward to the Season of Sleep.

Beannachta!

AD Sean Harbaugh
Sierra Madrone Grove

Hazelnut MotherGrove and Duir de Danu Grove: News from California

Here's news of both Hazelnut MotherGrove (Online Branch: look at all the puns!) and Duir de Danu Grove. We're putting away the ordination equipment until May 1st 2008. If you want an online ordination from Hazelnut, get your name and information in now so that you will be first in line when Beltaine comes.

Tegwedd ShadowDancer
Chronicler and Co-ArchDruid for
Duir de Danu Grove
and Hazelnut MotherGrove Online Branch (Look at all the puns!)
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Sunset Proto-Grove: News from California

In California the summer months are traditionally dry and the hills of Northern California turn to a beautiful golden yellow, dotted with oak trees. This trademark landscape makes my heart smile whenever I return home from a trip. So many times I have been on a plane as we come over the Sierra's into Sacramento airport, and a visitor to the area, will look out there window and say, 'Oh how awful everything is dry and dead.' And I can't help but explain that this is California in her summer glory...that those hills are what the golden state was really named after, and those who don't believe that California has seasons, do not know her very well.

Today is our first real day of rain this fall/winter season.

In other states I never know what to expect, and inevitably end up in a hail storm with a t-shirt on. Having grown up here, I have always known how to dress for the day, when I wake up in the AM. If its going to rain, you know it when you get up, it very rarely changes. Being in an inland yet coastal region the weather seems to be pushed out by the winds that kick up only after sunset. Today this first rain has made the countryside gray and it feels as if a blanket has covered the valley I live in, making me long for a cozy sweater.

I made my first winter, pot of soup yesterday. Our weekly box of organic veggies is transitioning from summer melons and tomatoes to winter squash and chard. Add a few veggies, beans, veggie stock, garlic and parmesan and the squash and chard become a great winter vegetarian soup. My friends and family love this soup, because it's never the same twice...I use whatever I have on hand to fill the pot.

I only hope that this warm cozy feeling continues, and calms down the chaotic world I have been living in this fall. I have always thought of fall, as a wonderful time for sweaters and brisk walks...but this fall it has been full of hospitals and airplanes, two of the least natural environs I know. For myself, the only health issues I have had to deal with are a case of hives from the stress of spending so much time in those places, caring for those I love. I look forward to the winter holiday schedule as a time to retreat into home and family.

Next week our family will take our Samhain journey to the land of Disney. There we will encounter the house of haunts and jack the pumpkin king. Thing 1 and Thing 2 are delighted.

All my best to each of you, and may your season of sleep be restful and rejuvenating.

~O.

Poison Oak Grove, News from California

In the Missal-Any I've tried to publish the latest news on Sudden Oak death. It is a fungus, *Phytophthora ramorum*, that girdles the tree, killing everything above the roots. However the roots, being still alive, send out new shoots. So it is with the oak, so it is with the Poison Oak Grove.

It's been a time of transition this past year. It seemed to start when I, the AD decided to go on a vision quest this past summer. (Seems once you step into that realm things come at you like bowling balls in a 3-D movie.). Much of the transition has been internal but it has had its outward aspects too. I really learned what the term "getting worked" means. And it's still going on. I am definitely ready for the Season of Sleep and the time of calm and contemplation.

We had the honor and privilege to have David and Deborah Gavrin Frangquist join us for our Fall Equinox service and social. Whereas the evening didn't go as planned, it caused me to look at my own beliefs and what is it that makes the RDNA the RDNA. There are so many druid groups out there nowadays. I'm on a couple of druid email lists and news groups and get to see what the emphasis and tenor of the various groups are. There seems to be a competition at times. Who is more studious, who is more religious, who does more reconstruction, who is more serious. Talking with the Frangquists made me realize that I was falling into that competition trap. Our grove doesn't have any "official" classes or study programs (I look at how we teach as the "Socratic method") or multitudes of offices in various subgroups. We are but humble druids.

But the beauty of the RDNA is it is simple in and of itself. It's almost like a Zen koan. I could spend hours contemplating the tenets or just consider that nature is good. That was when it hit me. Nature. Going back to Nature and that is it personified in the Earth Mother. It was right there all around me and the grove. (There's no place like Grove!) That's what our focus should be. How simple, yet profound. I, and the other member(s), will still continue our studies into the mythology, history, and folklore of the Celts, and continue our Scottish Gaelic studies. That too is one of the beauties of the RDNA; it leaves room for druids like us. But it is Nature that is our center or balance and that which we return to.

The Frangquists' visit was the catalyst to needed changes in the grove. As a result the Preceptor Larry P. and his wife have resigned. Morag, though First Order, will be acting Preceptor until she takes her Second Order in the Season of Life next year. With no constraints new grove activities are being planned. Back in the day our parent grove Live Oak Grove used hold Samhain vigils. Poison Oak Grove will be resurrecting this practice this very Samhain! Those who vigiled back then are either not around any more or don't remember what they did other than jumping over the altar fire, hence my reprinting an old article from the first publication of the Missal-Any, because it goes into more detail what was done. We are piecing together the past to create the future.

And for Beltaine we are planning a joint grove "Waters-of-Life Tasting" with Sunset Proto-Grove.

And not to forget honoring our ancestors, as I do every year I put together a package for the Festival of the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts at the Zen Buddhist Abbey at Mount Shasta in where Emmon is buried. In it I include things he would have liked or eaten when he was alive. This year there was a box of maple sugar leaf candy, a beeswax candle, Scottish porridge oats, almond butter, and three different kinds of apples. And of course a small pumpkin!

Samhain as a time of rebirth, as a time of moving from chaos to order is definitely true for Poison Oak Grove this year!

Missionary Impossible file 6: Death and All That

By Mike Scharding, Diplo Druid

Death. End of existence. The cessation of biological activity. It's been around forever.

We see things die all the time, we eat dead plants and animals everyday. We wear leather, sit at wooden tables, and are surrounded by dead things in our home. Civilizations, ecologies, planets; they all rise and fall and disappear on different time scales, but eventually. We know this, but do we accept it?, and what are you going to do about it?

We should be quite used to death's presence, but we aren't. It is still a shock whenever a person we know or care about dies, or in our modern society, to see a person or creature die before our very eyes. Nothing terrifies most creatures than their own death, especially for us humans, since we tend to cogitate more than our furry, feathery and scaly friends. It is the rare person, I think, who either has rock bottom belief that the next world is really a better place and is eager to get there, or is such at one with the universe, that they can shrug off this corporeal shell and allow it to return to the earth in peace. Bless those folks, but then there's the rest of us, who might flirt with death occasionally, but we'd usually rather avoid it personally as long as possible.

The topic comes up naturally most often for Druids around Samhain, which is a traditional time to recollect ancestors, consider our own mortal end, and notice that much of the plants appear to be dying all around us in the temperate climates. We then usually burn a lot of wood, dance along the edge of the Other World for one or two nights, and make a quick attempt to "put it behind and put it together" as we prepare for that new Celtic year.

Naturally, Reformed Druids, being what we are as an overall group, don't have clear guidance or prescribed beliefs on how we feel about death, or what happens afterwards. Certainly, we all have our opinions and preferred destinations and means to get there. Usually, we look for guidance from observing Nature's cycles about us, various world and traditional religions, some guesswork, wishful thinking and conversations with other folks. Even in the most orthodox religion, I doubt you'll ever find two people who agree on all the details when death comes up, we're simply too creative about it.

While death can be depressing, it is also a very potent motivator. Starvation makes people work to earn food and shelter; not a lot of people like work for its own sake. The existential angst over the loss of our wonderful consciousness drives folks to come up with clever philosophies, poetry and religions. When we feel the smell of death approach, we start to concentrate on achieving our procrastinated priorities with our decreasing remaining time. How many people finally repent of stubborn grudges and mistakes on their death bed? How many people decide to "give something back" to the world, after they realize they can't take it with them, and they wish a legacy or reputation to remain in the world after them? The need to leave a mark on the world more permanent than our fleshy existence is apparent in the arts, politics and history. Most of our monuments speak of this desire, from the first rock piled on top of the other to the Taj Mahal and beyond.

Death makes most of us more religious. Science and medicine and magic might offer the promise of longer, healthier life spans, but scams aside, they acknowledge there is a practical limit. Some religions love death, it is the primary reason people join many world religions; they offer a clear program, guarantees, and warn about dire alternatives if you try another brand. Basically, no matter how nice a person you are, some religion somewhere is quite certain, you don't belong in a nice place in the afterlife, because you haven't joined them. Ergo, damned if you do, damned if you don't. So you can't make all religious authorities happy, so I've always thought it's probably best to go ahead and pick the one you agree with the most, rather than because it is the most populous and/or closest to your home, unless you expect material membership rewards or need the social interaction. At least to me, if I'm going to be held accountable, it should at least be my own fault for picking the "wrong path."

Other religions really don't like death. Take Shinto in Japan. Although 80% of more of the population of Japan takes part or believes in some aspects of Shinto, less than 1% of the population gets a funeral service (usually only Shinto Priests themselves). Buddhists tend to corner the funeral market instead. Call it religious specialization.

Why not? Because Shinto is a religion about the celebration of life, not necessarily hedonism, but birth, growth, marriage, reproduction, community celebration and farming. Outside of its pre-WWII imperial manifestation, it doesn't have much impetus to go about "saving" people quickly before their demise robs of the chance of salvation in this life.

We've all heard the importance of balancing quantity vs. quality in life. We'd all like a lot of the best, but when we have to pick one over the other, it is interesting to see which we lean towards. Alexander the Great, supposedly asked the gods for a short world-changing life rather than a long-lived dull one. Others like Methuselah, lived 900 years, but didn't do much but walk around and talk with Jehovah. Most people are a bit careful, we all face times in our lives when we don't play it safe, "live a little" by risking dying quicker, or choose the harder path. Few of us stick our fingers in the light socket just for the fun of it. Some people look forward to death when either their life plans aren't going so well or their physical entity is ailing so bad; it is the "great release" or the "big escape" for such people. Heroes and martyrs and declining rock stars, can become even more influential with a timely or sensational death.

Many of us actually shuffle about this mortal coil a lot longer than we really want to, not out of lack of interest in the alternative, but due to the weight of obligations. We've all heard stories of the person who kicked the bucket after their child's marriage, a graduation, the day after a war finishes, ect. Many cultures believe that a person who has too many unfinished affairs when they die, have a danger of becoming ghosts, trapped between existences. For such people, these projects need closure before they can accept death's long-avoided embrace.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping there
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
**But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.**

We admire several trees, such as sequoias and bristlecones for their potential great age and/or size. However, it is interesting, that for all our concerns of longevity, we live quite a bit longer than most of the other animals. Only turtles and parrots are known live longer than us. So is asking for a few more years, perhaps a little selfish, considering how good we already have it? I'd like to close with a story.

Why We Live So Long

One day, the Creator created the dog and said, "Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this, I will give you a life span of twenty years."

The dog said, "That's a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I'll give you back the other ten?" So The Creator agreed.

On the next day, the Creator created the monkey and said, "Entertain people, do tricks, and make them laugh. For this, I'll give you a twenty-year life span."

The monkey said, "Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the Dog did?" And the Creator agreed.

On the next day, the Creator created the cow and said, "You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the [sun](#), have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years."

The cow said, "That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty and I'll give back the other forty?" And the Creator agreed again.

Then on the next day, the Creator created man and said, "Eat, sleep, play and enjoy your life. For this, I'll give you twenty years."

But man said, "Only twenty years? Could you possibly give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back; that makes eighty, okay?" "Okay," said the Creator, "You asked for it."

So that is why the first twenty years we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family. For the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. And for the last ten years we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.

Life has now been explained to you. Go live.

* * * * *

For more on this cheery topic, read another essay found in the Druid Missal-Any at <http://www.geocities.com/mikerdna/newmissal9.html>

Honouring the Ancestors

By J. Craig Melia, Druid of the Isles

Honour the Ancestors, worship the Gods and do no evil.'

Who now can trace a continuous line of their Ancestors back further than a few centuries? Who sings their praises? Who knows their histories and tells their tales?

Indigenous peoples the world over hold tradition as the basic tenet of society. It is the glue that binds them together. It is one of the points of focus that creates a group identity. And the greater part of this is our relationship with our Ancestors.

People leave their mark upon the landscape, and this is often the link to our connection to them. This is not just true of monuments like Stonehenge or New Grange, but of the entire landscape around us. The city that sprang up from the group of huts by a stream, the rolling green hills of the farm, the old wall by the road-side. Our ancestors live on.

I am lucky that I can stand beside a nearby canal on the former site of a house where my Great-great-great-great Grandfather lived, and I can 'feel' the connection. John O'Donohue, in his book on Celtic Spirituality 'Anam Cara' recounts a tale of a Connemara priest who was going to build a car-park outside his church.

There was a ruin nearby which had been vacated for fifty or sixty years. He went to the man whose family had lived there long ago. He asked the man to give him the stones for the foundation. The man refused. The priest asked why and the man said: ‘*Céard a dhéanfadh anamacha mo mhúinitire ansin?*’ i.e. What would the souls of my ancestors do then? ¹

Their actions have brought you to where you are today, allowing you to be who you are. If for no reason other than that we should honour them. And in the very act of acknowledging our ancestors it helps us to find our place in the world, a sense of belonging within the tribe. Our past and our future.

Living with Honour

The Three highest causes of the True Human are: Truth, Honour, and Duty.

The importance of belonging to a larger social unit is often overlooked. Most people only feel the power of the tribe when supporting their team at a sporting event.

Within Brehon Law the ‘Tuath’, the family, extends to ‘four generations of descent from a common ancestor’. All the rights of an individual existed only within the protection of this grouping. The honour of your kin-group was a thing worth dying for.

It should be noted that the Gaelic word for Honour - ‘*enech*’ is linked to the word for Face. To lose face within your Tuath was considered a great disgrace, but to allow someone from your Tuath to lose face was seen as worse. The Brehon Law is a collection of legal precedents, tradition and custom. Within Gaelic society they allowed the people to police themselves. Truth, Honour and Justice, instead of just been ‘buzzwords’, were held to be principles for everyday living.

Sadly, in these modern times the individual is seen as more important than the family or the community. Even within modern spirituality the impetus is more towards ‘personal spiritual growth’, instead of the practitioner asking how they can serve the community.

The Otherworld

In a wider sense too, we need to honour those who have trodden the path before us, our Spiritual Ancestors. Those who maintained the Sacred places and kept the traditions alive, those who sang of the Gods, the Filidh and the Bards.

The Ancestors inhabit the Otherworld, but where is this? It is here and now, it is yesterday and tomorrow. The portals to this world lies all around, a landscape within a landscape. There the ancestors live, not in an afterlife, but in a place where the normal physical rules of time and space cease to exist. A century can last but a minute there, or a minute a century. The pathway to this realm lies behind the ‘real’ world, hidden until the Mists of Manannan part.

Celtic tales abound with heroes adventuring to the Otherworld, to return with gifts for mankind, new skills, new food sources, knowledge and wisdom. The entrance was often one of the many Tumuli that are spread throughout the landscape. Tertullian states that the Celts ‘spend the night near the tombs of their famous men’, so that they might seek knowledge from them. In the first Branch of the Mabinogion Pwyll is doing just this when he sees Rhiannon ride passed. Pwyll himself later becomes the Head of Annwyn, the Brythonic Otherworld. The poet Seanchán Torpéist sought out the burial mound of Ferghus mac Róich so as to learn the ‘*Tain Bo Cuailgne*’ (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), which had been lost to the poets of Ireland. The great warrior himself came to tell the tale least it be forgotten.

The Otherworld is both the Realm of the Gods and the Realm of the Dead. It is a strange island across the sea, it is a revolving palace of wonders. It is the land of the young, it is the enticing plain.

Ancestors of the Tribe

‘All the Gauls assert that they are descended from Dispater, their progenitor.’

To the Celts, the Gods themselves were seen as the original ancestors, the progenitors and protector of the tribe, provider of fertility. In Gaelic mythologies Bilé, cognate with Belenus and the Brythonic Beli, is referred to as ‘*the Father of Gods and Men*’. Traditionally several royal lines of Wales claimed descent from Beli Mawr. Bilé has been linked to the Daghdha whose name appears to be a title, the ‘Good God’, who is also given the sobriquet ‘*Ollathair*’, that is ‘father of all’.

Bilé and Danu, (Beli and Don), seem to have formed the closest thing to a Celtic Universal Mother and Father. The name Bilé is thought to mean ‘Sacred Tree’, while Danu is ‘She that flows’. Danu herself was also seen as the Mother of the Gods, who were collectively known as the Tuatha de Danann, the people of Danu. In Welsh mythology they were known as the House of Don.

H.R. Ellis Davidson in ‘Myths & Symbols of Pagan Europe’ states:-

‘Danu, probably the same as the goddess Anu, called by Cormac the mother of the Irish gods. Both goddesses have general characteristics of the Great Mother, partly identified with the Earth itself, as suggested by the name of the two rounded hills in Kerry known as the Paps of Anu.’²

In the ‘*Lebor Gabala Erenn*’ (The Book of the Taking of Ireland) the sons of Mil are seen as the pseudo-historical ancestors of the Irish peoples. It is interesting to note that the father of Mil was Bile. Donn, the eldest son of Mil, became the ruler of the Otherworld, sacrificing himself so that he may guide future generations. He is said to have inhabited the small island called Bull Rock near the Beare peninsula, known as Tech Duinn - The House of Donn. In ancient times, this was a place of pilgrimage, indeed, though now Christianized, it maintained its prestige until recently. Despite the suppression of many pre-Christian cults, folk-tradition has kept much alive.

The four seasonal festivals, despite Christianization, still continue practices begun in the Iron Age and beyond. The spring festival of Oimeig, long been sacred to St. Brigid, the Mary of the Gael, keeps alive many of the cult practices of her pagan namesake. Beltaine and Lughnasa too maintain a continuation of pre-Christian rites. Samhain, the festival of the dead, has survived in many of the customs of All Hallows Eve. The traditions of our Ancestors still live on.

We may speak of ‘getting back to our roots’, and perhaps we should consider this. The roots of our family are our ancestors, and like every tree, that is from where we must seek nourishment if we would continue to grow.

J.Craig Melia - 1999

(Published in “Sacred Hoop” magazine - www.sacredhoop.org. Republished in “A Druid Missal-Any” by permission of the author.)

¹ John O’Donohue, from his book on Celtic Spirituality *Anam Cara*. ISBN number 0-593-04201-8. Published by Bantam Press

² H.R. Ellis Davidson in *Myths & Symbols of Pagan Europe*. ISBN number 0-8156-2441-7. Published by Syracuse University Press

Announcements

Druidic Peace Statement

Please forward widely.

<http://www.whiteoakdruids.org:80/news/item.cfm?NewsItemID=11>

The Druids of old were known as peacemakers and were once so respected that when they stepped onto the battlefield all hostilities immediately ceased.

It is in the spirit of reverence for these ancient ways that The Order of the Whiteoak (Ord na Darach Gile, www.whiteoakdruids.org) wishes to affirm its support of peace and justice in the world.

War is properly the option of very last resort and pre-emptive war is both immoral and unethical. We urge our political leaders to use diplomacy to create goodwill, peace and harmony between nations, religions, and peoples.

Signed:

- a.. Ellen Evert Hopman (Saille), Co-Chief of Order of the Whiteoak, Massachusetts, USA
- b.. J Craig Melia (Mhaille), Co-Chief of Order of the Whiteoak, Lancashire, England
- c.. Dr. Kenneth Proefrock, Surprise, Arizona, USA
- d.. Justin Fisher, USA

We welcome Druids from all Orders and other friends and supporters to co-sign this document. Should anyone wish to add their name to this Peace statement please email your details to membership@whiteoakdruids.org

Gaelic Book News - On-line ordering from Siol Cultural Enterprises

OK, we've finally decided to take the leap into the 21st century and now offer (secure) on-line purchasing. Not all our pages have been converted but you many wish to look it over and try it out – Christmas is coming! Our website again is <http://www.gaelicbooks.com>. Let me know if you have any problems or suggestions.

Gàidhlig Troimh Chòmhradh now on CD

Speaking of technology advances in Gaelic, Catriona Parsons' popular course is now available in CD instead of tape format! Pricing for each of the three modules is \$44.95 plus \$3.00 shipping within Canada and \$6.00 to the US (all pricing is in Canadian funds).

Teach Yourself Gaelic Sale Extended

Due to overwhelming positive response to our sale on Teach Yourself Gaelic, due in large part to the demand of students from the Atlantic Gaelic Academy, we are extending our sale until the end of November. The price is \$21.67 (a 38% discount). Shipping is \$11.50 anywhere in Canada and the US.

Dictionaries Currently in Stock

Gaelic Words & Phrases from Wester Ross (English-Gaelic) - Roy Wentworth - \$109.95
Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language (MacLennan) - \$26.95
The Essential English-Gaelic Dictionary (Watson) - \$49.95
The Essential Gaelic-English Dictionary (Watson) - \$49.95
Gaelic Words & Phrases from Wester Ross (Wentworth) - \$104.95
The Gaelic-English Dictionary (Colin Mark) - \$69.95
Gaelic-English/English-Gaelic Pocket Dictionary - \$12.95
Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary—second hand, Gairm hardcover, 1988, fading to spine of dust-jacket otherwise excellent condition - \$54.95

Keppoch Bard

Please note that our plans for the Keppoch Bard's poetry has been delayed and not abandoned. We have put nearly five years of work into it and definitely plan to see it through.

Gaelic Readers

My wife, Laurinda, and I are currently putting together a series of beginner reading books which will be sold in sets (by level) and include a CD of the stories in each set. If you are interested in this series, particularly for your class or school please let us know.

Office of Gaelic Affairs

The new office of Gaelic affairs is now up and running and their website is now available:
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/oga/>. They have sound files for the Gaelic pages so you can listen as you read.

Their first newsletter is also out: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/oga/pubs/GaelicNewsletterSept07.pdf>

Cruinneachadh nan Gaidheal - Gathering of the Gaels - July 24th, 2008

Mark your calendars now. In conjunction with Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig which takes place for the first time in North America at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish Nova Scotia, the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia will be hosting a very special gathering of its own. There will be Children's activities, a Mini-Conference, Classes and Workshops in Gaelic Language/Song, and in Fiddle/Stepdancing/Piping, Banquet with Youth Performers, Kitchen Ceilidh with Nova Scotia Tradition-bearers, Milling Frolic, Gala Concert, Instructors and Performers from Nova Scotia and Scotland's Gaidhealtachd too! More details to follow.

Dates: July 24 - Jul. 28th, 2008

Location: The Millennium Centre, St. Francis Xavier University Campus, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Aisrigh nan Gàidheal Live!

The local radio station in the French community of Cheticamp is now live on the internet which means you can now listen to the Gaelic/English program Aisrigh nan Gàidheal on Saturday, 5PM-6PM AST (Atlantic Standard Time) or 4PM-5PM EST. The weekly program features local and Scottish Gaelic song and instrumental music and is broadcast in Scotland from time to time. You can catch it at: <http://www.ckjm.ca/english/home/index.cfm>.

Let us know if you have any special events which would appeal to our customers.

Le gach deogh bheannachd,

Trueman

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NEWS

Cal can boot all tree-sitters, judge says

By Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco Chronicle, October 29, 2007

UC officials can remove all the tree-sitters at Memorial Stadium, even if police can't identify the protesters by name, a judge ruled Monday.

“This ruling means it’s all but impossible for reasonable people to see this protest as something benign,” said UC Berkeley spokesman Dan Mogulof. “It’s an illegal and dangerous occupation of university property.”

UC officials are “evaluating” how to proceed, Mogulof said. Tree-sitters and their supporters could not be reached for comment on the ruling.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Richard Keller’s ruling amends his order a month ago that gave UC police the authority to remove only tree-sitters who were identified by name.

At the time, UC officials could identify only one of the protesters, David Galloway, 36, because the other dozen sitters wear masks and would not give their real names. Campus officials asked the judge to broaden the ruling to include unnamed protesters.

“The court finds that the ends of justice would be served by modifying the order ... to insert the phrase, ‘and all other persons acting in concert or participating with them,’ “Keller wrote in his new ruling, referring to the tree-sitters.

The protesters have been perched in part of an oak grove next to the stadium since December in an attempt to block the university’s plan to cut down about two-thirds of the grove to build a \$125 million athletic training center. Since the protest began, UC police have issued about 200 citations for trespassing, and officers have complained of degenerating health and safety conditions at the grove, including spilled buckets of urine and feces. A few protesters have fallen, without serious injury.

Protesters argue that they have kept the grove clean and safe but have been hampered by an 8-foot-tall chain-link fence the university erected around the site in August to create a buffer zone between football fans and tree-sitters.

The sitters say the fence prevents their 24-hour ground crew from efficiently tending to the tree-sitters’ food, water and waste needs.

Meanwhile, the tree-sitters have expanded their network of platforms, tarps and ladders to form a small village in the foliage, complete with propane stoves, musical instruments and an elaborate highway of ropes and pulleys.

Monday’s court order gives UC police more authority to arrest, cite and detain the tree-sitters, who are in violation of campus lodging rules. Tree-sitters could face \$1,000 fines and five days in jail for violating the order.

The university wants the tree-sitters to come down voluntarily to comply with the judge’s ruling, Mogulof said. “We’d like to see this end peacefully, but it’s up to them how it will be resolved,” he said.

Whether UC can build the training center could be resolved by another Alameda County Superior Court judge, Barbara Miller, who is expected to rule by mid-January on a lawsuit filed by the city, tree advocates and neighbors who seek to block plans for the center.

UC asked Miller to postpone a decision until after the Cal Bears’ last home football game, on Nov. 10 against USC, because of possible confrontations between fans and protesters.

Stone head mystery leaves area vexed

Reuters, Wed Oct 3, 2007 8:33am EDT

By Luke Baker

LONDON (Reuters) - They’ve been left on doorsteps and outside post offices in the dead of night, but no one knows what to make of the mystery of the stone heads.

As many as 20 artfully carved faces, miniature versions of the Easter Island sculptures, have been deposited in sleepy villages across northern England in recent weeks, leaving the recipients intrigued and confused.

Each of the stone heads, some measuring up to 45 cm (18 inches) high, is slightly different, but all of them have the same riddle attached, written on a thin blue card.

“Twinkle twinkle like a star, does love blaze less from afar?” it reads, with the word “paradox” written around the points of a star.

While a publicity stunt of some sort is suspected, not unlike the crop circle mysteries that obsessed Britain a decade ago, there are no clues as to who may be leaving the heads. Police, residents and recipients are all non-plussed.

“It appeared last Monday in the early hours of the morning,” said Fiona Gould, the owner of the Forrester Arms Hotel in the village of Kilburn, North Yorkshire.

“I love it. We’ve nicknamed it Forest Lump. We’ve put him on the end of the bar and he gets a pat on the head before everyone goes to the races.”

Valerie Hoyes, who runs the post office in the village of Braithwell, about 40 miles south of Kilburn, discovered hers back in August, but thought nothing of it. She didn’t tell anyone until others came forward.

After the discovery, her husband reviewed security camera footage and caught a glimpse of a man getting out of a car, but his face was indistinguishable and the mystery remained.

“This chappie just drove up at 4.15 in the morning, parked his car and dropped off these three stone heads on the doorstep,” Valerie Hoyes told Reuters.

“They’re a bit like gargoyles. They’re very bizarre.

“We’ve been living in Braithwell for 26 years and we’ve never known anything like this at all. Never. People wonder if it’s part of the occult.”

Stonemasons say the sculpting is good, and the stone of high quality. It would have taken hours of careful work to make them.

Since her discovery, Gould has received emails from all over with suggestions of who might be responsible. One pointed to a local sculptor called Billy Johnson, but he’s not been found.

Either way, she’s not worried. “Forest Lump” has brought her luck, she says.

“It put the wind up everyone for the first week or so, but now I like it. Friends who I haven’t heard from or seen in years are getting in touch, so I’m very happy.”

EVENTS

Growing a Pagan Nonprofit Organization Cherry Hill Seminary Winter Intensive 2008 Presented in conjunction with PantheaCon 2008

This one-day program is aimed at all Pagans who are taking on the challenges of building and sustaining nonprofit organizations. Cherry Hill students will earn 1.5 unit hours toward their programs as well as credit for attending one of the two *required* intensives. Because this session is expected to be of interest to the wider Pagan community, it is being offered to non-students at the same rate. Each session will be taught by Pagan presenters who are experts in the topic. A registration link for CHS Winter Intensive 08 can be reached at <http://www.cherryhillseminary.org>. This link is for use by both students and non-students. Sign up early to reserve your place in the program!

Date: Thursday, February 14, 2008
Location: DoubleTree Hotel, San Jose, CA
Cost: \$90

Growing a Pagan Non-Profit Organization

Schedule:

9-10:20 a.m. Introduction and Overview: What is a Non-Profit 501(c)3?

10:40 - noon Record-keeping and Financial Accountability for Non-Profits

Noon to 2 p.m. Lunch break

2 - 3:20 p.m. Information Management Systems

3:40 - 5 p.m. The Non-Profit Workforce: Care and Management of a Volunteer Staff

5 - 7 p.m. Dinner break

7 - 8:20 p.m. Fund-raising and Marketing for a Non-Profit

8:30 - 9 p.m. Wrap-up, evaluations, reflection papers for CHS students

Attendees are responsible for their own transportation and lodging. Information on the PantheaCon hotels and directions to the site can be found on the PantheaCon website at <http://www.pantheacon.com/08/index.php>

For more information, contact Jane Raeburn, Public Information Officer, at 207-251-2143 or pio@cherryhillseminary.org

CALENDAR

Samhain, when the Sun is half-way between the Fall Equinox and the Midwinter Solstice, will occur this year on Wednesday Nov. 7 at 11:25 am, 2007.

A Druid Missal-Any is published eight times a year. Post mail subscriptions are \$9.00 and email subscriptions are free. Or write an article or send us a cartoon and receive a year's post mail subscription free. Write A Druid Missal-Any, P.O. Box 406, Canyon, CA 94516.

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