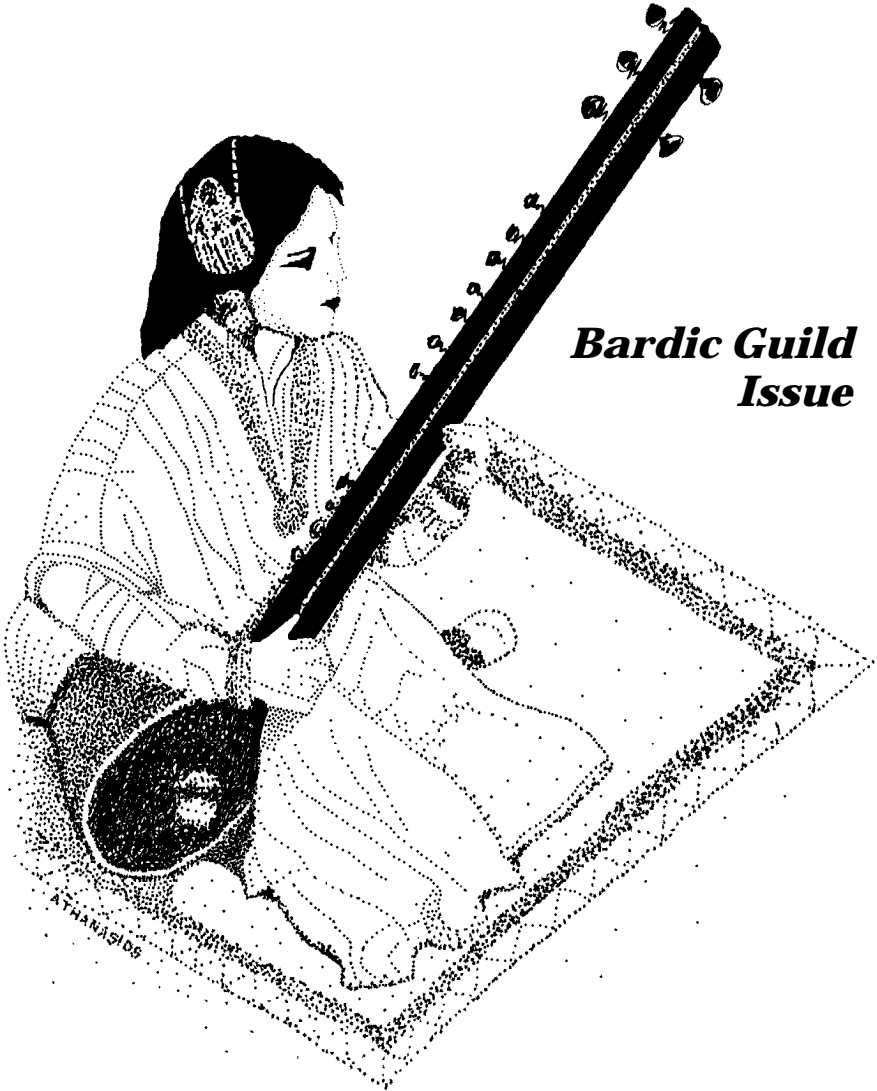


OAK LEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin
Spring 2003

Issue 20



***Bardic Guild
Issue***

OAK LEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ar nDraiocht Fein Issue 20

Oak Leaves is the quarterly journal of Ar nDraiocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship, Inc. It is intended to be both a newsletter informing members and the Neopagan community of ADF's activities, as well as a forum for our scholarly and artistic explorations.

STAFF

Chronicler:
Jenni Hunt
Senior Editor:
Athanasios
Proof Editor:
Pandora
Art Coordinator:
Heather S. Koerner
Advertising Coordinator:
Selene Tawny

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Oak Leaves is free to regular members of ADF. A membership application can be found at the end of this issue. Non-member subscriptions had be obtained for \$20.00. Details in the back of this issue.

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For information on submission guidelines and advertising rates contact the Senior Editor, Athanasios at:

athanasiosofspfd@aol.com

Or Write:

Athanasios
C/O
Grove of the Twilight Owl, ADF
P. O. Box 2793
Springfield, OH 45501

COVER DESIGN

Athanasios

Editorial.....

You will notice that the format of Oak Leaves has changed. You will also notice that the list of Groves is missing from this issue. The change to a smaller format makes the production of Oak Leaves a lot easier, and as a result will help keep Oak Leaves on a production schedule of four times per year. I know many ADF members have expressed their frustration regarding the timeliness of Oak Leaves. I too share your frustration.

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MOTHER GROVE OF AR nDRUIDHT FEIN

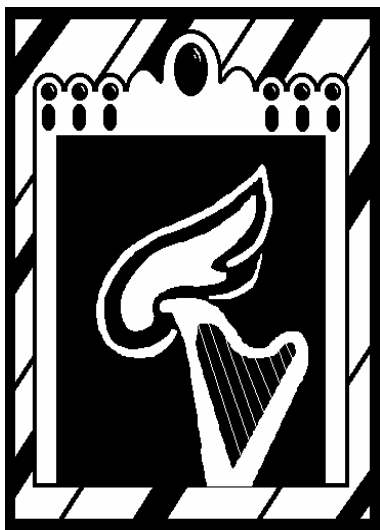
- **Archdruid:** Skip Ellison
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- **Scribe:** Vacant
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- **Guild Master:** Gwynne Green
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An Interview with ADF Chief Bard
Gwynne Green.
By Athanasios

Athanasios: I would like to start by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourself. How did you get involved with ADF and Paganism, and with the Bardic Guild?

Gwynne: Around 1990, I joined ADF as a

solitary. I realized when they sent me a copy of the original study pro-



Artwork by Heather S. Koerner

gram that I was missing pages 49 and 50. So I got out my ADF membership list of who was near me and worked up my courage, and called the Members Advocate - Paul Maurice. (Paul

lives in Providence, Rhode Island and I reside in the Boston area.) I asked him if he could just please mail me pages 49 and 50 of the study guide, and that was the only thing I was going to bother him for. He said, "No." I replied, "Excuse me?" He countered, "I will hand deliver it to your door, but I will not mail it to

y o u . "

I thought that was sort of interesting. He now knew I was a solitary, but he also told me he had no idea I was even there. ADF was still a relatively fledgling organization at the time, and he was not even aware of my pres-



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ence as an ADF member in his area. So not only was he, at that point, the Members Advocate, he was a local Senior Druid. He came to the house, and within a month or so, I had joined World Tree Grove down in Providence - which is a Norse grove. I was

working as Gael and I stayed there about two years or so. In May of 1994 myself, and three other folks founded Grove of the Sacred Crows. We are looking at our 9th Samhain coming up this year, which is very exciting for us. The Grove has withstood all difficulties sent to us so far and is well established. We work in a focused

Gaelic manner: Irish and Scottish.

Concerning my personal journey within Paganism: I was never a Wiccan; I was never into Dungeons & Dragons; I don't like comic books; I'm not a Trekkie; I was not trained in Western Mysteries tradition. So I have none of the requisite things that many in our community have. What qualifies me to be here? My avid, driving curiosity toward all things in the Gaelic Iron Age. Also, my music qualifies me, as well. My interest has always been the music, poetry, stories, satire and law that were involved in the Paleopagan community, but also in the modern Neopagan community.

Musically, I began playing flute at the age of 5. My grandfather was a flautist with the Boston symphony orchestra. My mother is a concert pianist. Most everyone in my family is an instrumentalist. Since then, I have become proficient on 18 different instruments. I attended Berklee College of Music. Prior to that, I trained classically. I have worked in nearly every musical situation other than opera, rap, and klezmer. I have spent time in cover bands and with a show band in the Northwest for four years. I have done a lot of work in the music business as a composer, arranger, and lyricist and have done a lot of recording.

When I joined World Tree Grove they did not have anyone doing the Bardic work; I just assumed that everyone's Senior Druid looked at them an hour before a ritual and said, "We need a processional." And they would have one. The idea that you could extemporize was a good thing, and very natural.

Athanasios: You have several responsibilities within ADF. What are some of these?

Gwynne: Right now within ADF, I am Senior Druid and Senior Bard of Grove of the Sacred Crows, Garrán na bPréacháin Naomh. I'm the Chieftain, but in ADF terminology we are forced to use the term "Senior Druid." Also, I am the Bardic Guild Chief, and Preceptor, and Senior Faculty member. I teach in all branches and in all concentrations. I am also the Guild Master within ADF.

Athanasios: What does your role as ADF Guild Master entail?

Gwynne: The Guild Master position is one of the newest, if not the newest, position on the Mother Grove. It is the liaison between the Guilds and the Mother Grove. It is the Guilds' voice on the Mother

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Grove - where it does not pertain to the Study Program. The Study Program is under the purview of the ADF Preceptor. Certainly, I keep an eye on what's going on with the Study Program, it would be ridiculous and artificial not to. Being Preceptor, and Chief, of the Bardic Guild puts me on the Council of Lore as well. As Guild Master I have decided to join all Guild e-mail lists, to read them as often as I can, and help out with elections and various procedural concerns where and when I am asked to so do. I try to be there for the Guilds without being invasive and intrusive. My role is to be of positive assistance to the Guilds, and to help new guilds come into existence if that is necessary.

Athanasios: What is some of the History of the Bardic Guild, and how is your history intertwined with the Guild?

Gwynne: There were other Chief Bards ahead of me, and I would have to look back through the records to know who they are. Basically, Isaac Bonewits, Archdruid Emeritus, had told me that he had occasionally appointed a Chief Bard, but also that every time he appointed one, they would only last a few months for various reasons. In September of 1994, we were in New Hampshire for a 3rd Circle initiation for Ann Socolofsky - a third circle healer. People had come from all over the country. We were all gathered, and several people told Isaac that they would like to see me appointed Chief Bard, which was very lovely -

that sort of acclamation is very gratifying. I was told that every time there was a Chief Bard appointed they did wonderful work until they got the title and they either stopped working, left, or in some way became ineffective. I assured them I wouldn't do that, and I was appointed on September 17, 1994 Chief Bard of ADF. A few years later, the Guild also elected me to the same position, and I have been re-elected twice. Thus, I was appointed and elected. I am the longest standing officer in ADF to hold the *same post* for their tenure. People will read this and say either, "get rid of her" or "my that's nice, we have continuity." I hope it engenders the latter, because that is certainly my idea, that by staying in the same place, we will have a single vision: continuity in curriculum, faculty, and leadership, for a sustained time, to allow it to grow. We have multiple lives for a reason. It can take that long to achieve our goals!

Right after Isaac appointed me, Richard ap Morgan and myself had done a lot of talking about wanting the Bardic Guild to come immediately into existence. I appointed him as Vice Chief Bard. By November of that year, we had sent out a questionnaire to everyone in ADF who signed up on their original membership as being "bardicly interested." We mailed it to all of them at my expense, and asked what they wanted from a Guild. It was a short pamphlet called The Burning Soul, which had some Bardic pieces in it. It had the questionnaire in the middle that asked, "If you want a Bardic Guild how would you like it to look?" We had about a 12% response from it. We started building from there.

We have been teaching since that time. When I say "teaching", we taught by monthly appointments. A person signed up for the Bardic Guild by filling out a basic questionnaire telling us what branch they would like to study. Then they were assigned a Faculty Advisor. We had always utilized once a month telephone appointment, where the person would call the Advisor. Our biggest challenge, and our biggest benefit, has been the monthly appointment. It is the lynch pin of the program that there is direct one-on-one communication between the student and their Faculty Advisor. It's very structured, but still flexible and open to creativity. What we had trouble with was many people forgetting they had appointments and not calling in. We eventually went to a bi-monthly system. Now we have changed it again, and will see if it works. Presently, people will call us when they want an appointment. If they don't call us, they don't get an appointment, and if they want to schedule one, they call. All we ask is you don't request more than one appointment within a thirty day period, because some of us have as many as 40 students that we teach within ADF, and other programs. This is to keep the workload sane (we are all volunteers!). The faculty are all high caliber artists, musicians, poets, and storytellers. They really are teaching out of the goodness of their hearts, and their devotion to their Gods and people. The Bardic Guild started in 1994,

and we are still going strong and growing. I had a clear vision of what I wanted. I do not believe in doing things by committee. I know that's not PC, it's not popular, and that's maybe not what people want to hear, but we have been very successful. I have had solid participation from the other faculty members in parlaying this idea into reality (faculty is presently: Wry Welwood, Bardd Dafydd, Rob Barton, and myself; formerly: Richard ap Morgan aka Richard macKellly, and Wolfshadow).

Athanasios: What has kept the Bardic Guild going so strong?

Gwynne: I think a big part of it is the communication, one-on-one communication between the students and the faculty. This sort of open communication gives attention and nourishment to our Guild members. The deep need that exists within the Pagan Community to communicate through art is what keeps the Bardic Guild strong.

Athanasios: Could you tell me about the various programs of study within the Bardic Guild?

Gwynne: The program itself initially started with three branches: Musicians (Bairdne); Poets (Filidh); and Storytellers (Seanchaídh). Since its inception, we have also added 'concentrations', which are connected to the initial branches. The two concentrations right now are Brehons, or Gaelic law speakers or judges - why only the Gaelic Law? Because that's the only thing our faculty is trained to teach in this area. If we have other faculty members that eventually come to us that can teach ancient Norse law, or Greek law, or other ancient law systems, we will welcome them. The other concentration is the dreaded Satirist, the Cainte. Both of them are connected to the Filidh Branch. We do not yet have a Genealogists' or Historians' concentration, but I would think they would be the next ones. The Brehon concentration is labor intensive, and it has really taken a lot of effort. There are prerequisites for the concentrations. To enter the Satirists concentration your application has to be given in a satirical format. For example, we had one given to us all written on a matchbook in tiny little letters. I had another one written on a cocktail napkin. Another was made on a mechanical toy that actually turned and gave messages, and the entire check was written out on a balloon. If you can't come up something amusing to ask to be in this specialty, then why are you asking? If you're not a witty person anyway, then you are not going to survive as a Satirist. The serious prerequisite is that you have to have one rank in the Filidh Branch. For the Brehon concentration, your prerequisites are gaining two ranks in the Filidh Branch.

I should explain that of the three branches, you have five levels that are called ranks, and the names of the ranks are given in Irish; Fochlóc, Doss, Cano, Ánrad and Ollamh. Ollamh being the highest level,

and Fochlóc being the lowest.

Athanasios: What are some of the things that a person would study for the various ranks, for the Filidh Branch for example?

Gwynne: Not only are there five ranks but each rank is divided into five requirements. The requirements are built in a linear fashion. Say you are studying for the Fochlóc {first} rank of the Filidh branch. Rank one requirement one would always have something to do with the creative process. You would create a certain amount of poetry, which is divided into sacred, and secular themes. At Doss {second} rank Filidh, your first requirement would again have to do with the creative processes. The second requirement would have to do with additional learning. We accept lots of documentation and prior knowledge, especially at the first rank and are very open to people training on a local level providing they produce verification. The third requirement has to do with liturgical awareness and knowledge. Each Bardic Guild student each at first, third, and fifth rank receive a liturgical appointment during that level of curriculum with Robert Barton, our Liturgical Advisor for the Guild. The initial one is essentially a "Liturgy 101." Everyone from the neophyte Pagan to those who have been doing this many years always receive valuable information from this. Of course, the more information they have, the more training they have, the more ritual experience they have, the more it becomes an exchange of information. The newer the person is, the more it is instructive. They are sent a pamphlet prior to that so they can see what he's going to cover. Also, they're asked to participate in liturgy initially, and in ritual - and not just high days, but all sorts of rituals - and eventually, they're asked to help to construct a ritual and finally, conduct one. Many people would just say, "How can I conduct a high day? I might not be the Senior Druid." It doesn't have to be a *high day*; it could be a saining, a funeral, an honoring of a particular God or Goddess; it could be a blessing of a garden; it could be many, many things. The fourth requirement is a study requirement; it's about book lists and learning - especially within your cultural focus. And that's something I should touch on - when someone is entering the Bardic Guild, we ask what their cultural focus is-or are. Very few people work eclectically, because we honestly ask that they do three times the work. And why does that seem so pejorative? Because, frankly, working eclectically in the Bardic Guild doesn't seem to work very well. Every one who has started with this program seems to whittle it down to one focus, and it seems much more sane, clear, and intellectually stimulating for them.

Athanasios: I would imagine that things Gaelic would be the most popular.

Gwynne: Honestly, they still are. We have people working Norse, Welsh, Manx, Roman, Eastern European - Lithuanian and Baltic. We've had folks working with Greek endeavors; we've had various different foci, but the most popular is Gaelic, specifically, and Celtic, as a wider definition. Out of our faculty members, we have Rob Barton and I who specialize in Gaelic matters, Bardd Dafydd who concentrates in Welsh, and Wry Welwood who also works with Gaelic things, but we also have consultants. If we have students who are working Norse, I will ask the people I know who are experts in Norse areas, for example.

The students will get solid, quality information. If their advisors or I cannot provide it, we will find someone who can. The fifth requirement has to do with a specified project. At the first level, it's about the only place where we are encouraging a vast diversity of cultures, thoughts and ideas in this requirement. For example, in the Filidh Branch, the fifth requirement of the first branch is to examine three poets-as diverse in nature, culture, and time as possible-and compare and contrast them.

For the Bairdne, it's three different kinds of music-it could be anything from Polish folk dance Gaelic war songs. It's part of the Branch. So, the rank levels, redo with a specialized



Artwork by Kate Paddock

Athanasios: I had the a third rank audition at of that audition did that requirements for that

Gwynne: Perform- would be under re- we also have train- start until level two as there is no first rank audition.

to Speed Metal or early the "feed your head" coming up through all quirement five has to project.

pleasure of witnessing Wellspring. What part fulfill of the five re- rank?

ance and auditions quirement two, where ing. Auditions do not

Athanasios: So if someone is going from second to third rank, it requires an audition?

Gwynne: Yes it does. It depends on the Branch, of course, because obviously you're not going to audition a Brehon. But there is some sort of an accounting that they have to have made of their own work. It varies quite a bit between Branches.

I should mention that we have something in the Bardic Guild that does not get awarded every year - it's very subjective, and I award it as I feel it's needed when somebody has gone so far above and beyond with their art, that it **must** be recognized. This award of excellence is the "Chief Bard's Award." There is no regularity to when it is awarded: when it is merited, the achievement is honored. There's no Branch or

ALBAN ARTHAN JUST A MOMENT

It was a mystery. Even to him - the lord of mysteries himself - it was still a mystery. The question that puzzled the lord of puzzles was this: at what moment did winter end and summer begin?

To most of the guests gathered at this Yuletide celebration the defining moment was about now: even while surrounded by holly and pine on the darkest day of the year, as lord Hafgan toasted the coming of summer and the lengthening light. For although Hafgan was at his very weakest at this point, he was even now growing steadily stronger, while Cernunnos himself, currently at his most powerful, was only falling weaker by the hour.

Did the Lord of Summer's boastful toast herald the change? Or did it happen before this? The God of Ages let his ageless eyes become unfocused and as the pearly mists swirled around, he went back to a time not an hour before. He didn't just remember it, he was there and then, as he is everywhere and everywhen.

He was a Stag then, standing in the exact center of the ford, precisely at midnight. His huge rack of antlers spread out on each side, making him nearly wider than he was long. Hafgan stood before him, looking weak and puny compared to his summer self's majesty, yet still strong enough to raise the huge, old oaken club high overhead and bring it down in a crushing blow between his magnificent antlers. The terrible noise it made was a deafening C-R-A-C-K-K!, sounding like the sky itself had split in half. Indeed, that's almost exactly what it signified.

Every creature who heard that awful sound cried out itself in distress, yet Cernunnos himself barely flinched. One of his six attendants rode into the ford and carefully peered at the small wound on his shaggy head. "The Lord of Winter is hurt," he proclaimed, "so much worse shall this become, before the tide shall turn." This was just before they all went to the north side of the ford to celebrate the coming of summer. Was that the very moment when winter began to end? No. It was a short time before...

Cernunnos was standing still on the bank at the edge of the ford, calmly gazing across the water toward Hafgan and his party. It was when they first spied each other and committed to meeting and letting the seasons

turn again. But then, this moment naturally followed from their earlier agreement to meet. Was that when it began?

The Lord of Winter was at the Feast of Summer on the South side of the ford. The Sun was high overhead in a cloudless sky and a dozen baskets of fresh, ripe fruit and as many jugs of sweet mead were spread out in the hot meadow, all around them. He had just wounded Hafgan and publicly announced the beginning of Winter and was thinking about the turning of the seasons just ahead. He knew that while he might now be frail, he was soon to grow stronger and more powerful until he reached the peak of his might and then.....and then met Hafgan at the ford to allow him to strike the first blow against the winter. Summer and Winter looked at each other and silently acknowledged their next encounter.

But could that be the defining moment? Could winter end just as it began? “Just a moment,” He mused. “A moment in time may have the briefest of lives, but it does live. It is born, and so it must die! A moment has two ends!”

“And that’s the very moment the winter began to end,” He decided, “at the very end of the moment it began.

Surrounded by snow, Cernunnos contemplated the renewal of winter – half a year away.

Bardd Dafydd
Bardic Guild Advisor
Cano Seanchaí
Fochloc Cainte

FAN THE FLAME

Wet, warm, wild, wonderful
Fire flame finch flare
Mighty more marvelous
Warm, wondrous, wet.

Fiach Fionn
(aka Shaya Blair)
Fochlóc Filidh Candidate
Bardic Guild

OF GODS AND MEN

(Invocation to Braggi)

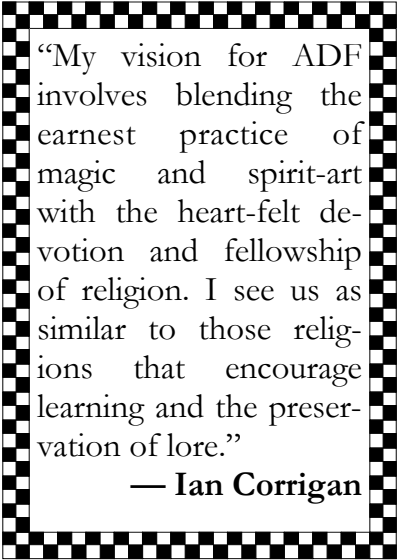
You too walked as man
Upon the earth
Across the ice flows
And rode in boats
Upon the waves

No walking on water
No miracles were yours
To claim, yet it was
Your words, Braggi
That brought about your fame

Was it Odin who looked upon
Your gift and saw there a kindred
Or was it your peers in the mortal
Plane who heard in you a greatness
Beyond this life and elevated you so

That tonight it is you
upon whom we call
Through it all,
to upon us install
a mantle of divinity.

Carol Cross
Fochlóc Filidh Candidate
Bardic Guild



“My vision for ADF involves blending the earnest practice of magic and spirit-art with the heart-felt devotion and fellowship of religion. I see us as similar to those religions that encourage learning and the preservation of lore.”

— Ian Corrigan

SACRIFICE

Stand.

Deliver pride to kind deadly hands,
deft fingers stark on night shade sleeves,
darting blade's divisions, dagger's quick work,
august bread man stab-slashed, dismembered,
each piece hurled past forest trees...

hissing screams rip through leaves.
Ard Righ Aran, High-King Bread, arcs
down, down to Crooked One's dark door.
This day arrives for all of us who must rise,
obey patient ancient Crom Dubh,
Dank Monarch of Mold, Rank Ruler of Rot.
Think not to escape King Bread's flight or fate.
At most we might delay that reckoning,

postpone by puny instants our meet ending,
to shriek past height of hyperbolic flight,
not so much bread as bred to end

as hunks of reeking meat, eh?
Yes, taut swell of breast sweetly sags,
Yes, fire of lover's loins barely an ember,
Yes, hearth flames rise in old souls' eyes
as they remember what they must recall.

Choose for your funeral shawl or veil
weavings exquisitely delicate to give
breeze passage, as well as time, with vision.
Never forget your part of hard bargains made before your
birth.
Never fear the berth of sleep within your sacrificial well.
Never count the cost of deeply living, loving, lost.
Ruler of Depths knows those in high places.

Shining Ones yet yield to more ancient King his due.

Crom Dubh traces paths within paths walked by Gods
throughout all lives, throughout all Ages,
waiting for us to wake and walk at last when rage is done.

Bride, straddling threshold and more, stood mighty,
delivered, as we must if we would pass
through old lives to new, keeping trust
with the bargain that gives us true passage; so
hands, deadly kind, to pride deliver.
Stand.

Wry Welwood
Bardic Guild Advisor,
Cano Filidh

IMBOLG

Our feet travel the distant paths of our ancestors and it strikes me that we, as a people, are at that Imbolg point in our existence in as much as our religion quickens and stirs and a new life is coming forth. Those cold snows pass and our way becomes clear and warm.

As we go to our Brighidnasadh celebrations, may we remember to ask for blessing for our organization.

A blessing from all of those ancient Gods and Goddesses of our peoples. A Brighidnasadh greeting to each and every one of the people who make up this organization.

Blessings for our leaders, our people, our peoples and each person.

Robert L. Barton
Bardic Guild Advisor
Doss Bard
Cano Cainte

To Hear at Midnight

I awake to hear at midnight something passing by my door
A doom enshrouded cortege with 9 horses on before
9 ravens cried the caoine as the mourners trod the way
9 veiled and weeping women scattered roses dried and grey
The moon, deriding sadness, had the gall to turn her gaze
On the assemblage of devotion making passage through the haze
Mist rivulets around them made a shroud of pearl bedammed
By the knowledge, ever present, that the dead would soon demand
In the silent solemn hour in the center of the night
A pause to reconsider all the moments of their might
And as I peered in fascination, colored calm by strangeness keen
The procession ceased its motion 'neath my aerie-all unseen-
Sooty stallions steamed the summer air impatient to proceed
To pass dusk and dawn and daylight, to pass beyond all need;
But other thoughts, then, had the dead reclining on the bier
Up rose the man, well clad in black, he beckoned ravens near
A murder of them alighted on the corpse's outstretched hands
And turned to burn into my eyes this feathered sable band
With wingtips touching as if in flight a line of night they made
Upon the limbs, both pale and grim, of the now advancing shade
Toward my cave of window wall he strode with smoothest gait
Until so close were birds and man, he hushed, 'the hour is late'
Unseeing seemed their upturned eyes, no certain mark they met
Yet, with wit of travelers flying home, this spot they'd n'er forget
At verge of road and meadow stood, deep shadowed, softly still
With patience of a suitor, waiting, breathed their ghostly will
Transfixed was I – in quiet wrapped – no heartbeat marred my poise
Then between us soared a pledge bygone – 'twas love's own poignant
voice
"At last..." entwined with ardor, he whispered, bridled with desire
"..My own! At last! Behold you! This one final time to see
Before me - drowned in midnight – this fateful eve with me
Oh come away, Oh far away, Oh come to the sundering sea
For this is where I now am bound and always there to be"
For journeyed on and on I rightly knew he must away
His wandering never ceasing until dark no more meets day
I dared no go, I could not stay, I had begged him not to ask
But ask he did, that vaporous eve when dear passions' final task
Was to loose the bonds that held him still to my ceaseless weeping heart
To give him reason out of kindness clear to, all alone, depart
"I cannot. No, I cannot." From lips unsure this fell
Down to the place he tarried raven-cloaked, desperate love enspelled

Then horses shook their blackened reins, the ravens grieved my words
Turned he and to the hearse he flew – all soundless – man and birds
The wheels did turn and churned the stone before my sorrowing sight
And onward slid this dread caravan of blackness into night
I once awoke at midnight as something passed beyond my door
A doom enshrouded cortege with 9 horses on before
9 ravens cried the caoine as the mourners trod the way
9 veiled and weeping women scattered roses dried and grey
But never again was I disturbed by any such as this
Never again to hear my lover speak this side of the adyss

Gwynne Green
Chief Bard

"Walking the World in Wonder"
by Ellen Evert Hopman
Book Review by Rev. Skip Ellison

This is a wonderful book for children aged 5 to 10 years. It is written from the perspective of the plant or tree and has many wonderful tidbits of magic lore scattered throughout that are written at a level the child can understand. One particularly good section is on the hawthorn tree, a tree of the faeries and magic.

Ellen is a master herbalist and it shows in this book! She gives the dosage for both adults and children and she tells the best time to gather each of the plants and how to use them.

Along with the medicinal uses she gives many cooking, dying and other interesting uses of the plants, such as using horsetail plants as pot scrubbers. There are many very tasty recipes including, among others, strawberry honey, raspberry honey, candied violet petals and batter-fried daylilies.

I feel that this is a good edition to the library of anyone with children that want to live a more natural way of life.

Book info: Healing Arts Press, Rochester, VT. 2000. 152 pages. \$19.95 suggested retail price. ISBN - 0-89281-878-6

Leadership

Herding Cats 1: Defining Cat

by Caryn MacLuan

This is the first of a series of essays which will explore some of the beginning concepts of leadership and group dynamics as they apply to the modern neo-pagan movement &/or a non-profit/volunteer organization. Topics will include effective speaking & listening, team building, motivating people, mentoring and counseling.

Many of us have heard the adage, "Organizing pagans is like herding cats." As a long time multiple cat owner, I can tell you that herding cats is easy once you know what motivates the cats. As a veteran of 18 years in the Coast Guard as both an enlisted person and as an officer, I can tell you that leading people is easy once you know what motivates them. So, lets begin by focusing on our terms.

What is a leader? The dictionary defines it as: "One that leads or guides or one who is in charge or in command of others. My definition comes from my experience of 26 years in the Pagan community and 17 years in the Coast Guard.

****One Person influencing OTHERS to achieve a GOAL****

Look at these definitions. No where does it say a priest or priestess, or clergy, or someone with a fancy title. Anyone can be a leader. All it takes is work and practice. Think of some leadership examples in our own community: organizer of an event, a ritual; a publication; leading a work detail at a festival (putting up a pavilion, in charge of registration); a Grove or Coven leader; the list goes on and on. All of these people have roles as Leaders, some small, some large. We are going to look at different aspects of leadership throughout these essays.

Think of a leader who you respect a lot. Take a few minutes and think about the things they did that made you respect that leader. Now ask yourself, am I doing those same things in similar situations?

*****If you strive to emulate the traits and values of the leaders you respect, you will have a much better chance of becoming leaders like them.*****

I'm not going to try to come up with a set of values for our entire com-

munity but coming up with a set for yourself or as a group (whatever the group) is a ‘tool’ to help you stay focused and give the individual or group an ideal to strive for.

What is a manager? The dictionary defines this as: “One who handles, controls, or directs, especially: One who directs a business or other enterprise; one who controls resources and expenditures, as of a household; or one who is in charge of the business affairs of an entertainer. Note the differences between Leader & Manager. In my experience, we are much more likely to run into managers trying to manage a group versus a leader trying to lead. This is most likely due to the fact that in our society and businesses we are more likely to receive managerial skills than we are leadership skills. This is all well and good as long as you are in a business situation, but trying to lead a group comprised of volunteers with nothing but managerial skills will not get you far. This is not to say that a leader does not need managerial skills nor that a manager can not be a leader. I see it more as: a manager motivates people to a task with money and a leader motivates people to a task by developing a shared vision within the group which the group has an interest in manifesting into reality.

****Studies show that employees rank
“full appreciation for work done”
as their #1 incentive, while most managers believe this to be #8.
Most managers believe “good pay” to be #1.****

I’ve always found if you treat people with courtesy and respect there is a reasonably good chance they will reciprocate in kind. People ‘love’ to know their hard work is not only recognized but appreciated. Think about it in your own job in your , Grove, Coven, group, whatever. How long are you going to continue to perform without some kind of compensation? In your job, the compensation is money but what about the volunteer work you do? How long are you going to pour your heart and soul into a project if all you ever have to show for it is at best nothing at all and at worst stress and criticism? Not long I’d wager, so why expect anyone else to?

Chieftains should encourage their subordinates to use creativity to fulfill responsibilities.

“Subordinates will never develop their skills if their Chieftain precisely directs them how to accomplish their assignments.”

— Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun

Micro-management will get you nowhere with a group of volunteers. Do you like someone watching everything you do and nit-picking every

detail? People are inclined to do more if they are allowed to pour their own creative energies into it. Bear in mind however, that this requires the leader to be able to gage the skill level of the group and to know when to tactfully assert him/herself and when to let the group's momentum carry it forward. Some research into group dynamics will serve you well here but the bottom line is that there is no substitute for experience. Every leader makes mistakes, just try to learn as much as you can from them and whatever you do, don't try to hide them. You're just as human as the next person.

We have defined the leaders of a group but what about the members? Who are they and what can reasonably be expected of them by the leader and by the other members of the group? I am going to use the term 'team member' because what we are going to be talking about is teamwork and team building. The definition of teamwork is: 'Unity of action to further the success of the group; Cooperation.' A good working paradigm of the team concept will not only make one a better leader but a better team member also. The way you handle yourself as a team member will have a direct effect on how others view you as a leader. If your group sees you not supporting (bad mouthing) the next echelon in the organization, what kind of example are you setting for the group to follow? People often parrot the examples they are shown, especially if they like and respect their leader. What is your vision for the group? What kind of examples do you need to set in order to fulfill that vision?

The Coast Guard leadership institute defines the following team characteristics as being the model to strive for. Team Member Characteristics:

- **Initiative:** doing a job without being told to, looking for ways to help people above and beyond what is expected.
- **Dependability:** shows up on time for meetings and work, always ready to lend an extra hand.
- **Learning from others:** willing to admit that he or she doesn't know the answer, seeks information and learning opportunities.
- **Responsibility:** takes ownership in job, doing what is right vice what is popular, doesn't need constant supervision to make sure the job gets done, includes responsibility to the organization/leader/co-workers/self.
- **Accountability:** accepts the consequences (good or bad) for their actions, doesn't try to shift blame.
- **Thinking:** - solves problem and finds creative solutions on his or her own.
- **Effective Communications:** good listener, gets point across in a succinct and persuasive way.
- **Commitment:** doesn't talk bad about the person in charge, willing to put in extra effort/time to get the job done.

Imagine what your group or any group you have ever worked with would be like if everyone (including you) intentionally worked at manifesting the above characteristics. OK how about if even half of them did it half the time?

WHAT YOU SEND OUT COMES BACK TO YOU!!!!

Remember the example you set as a leader or team member is exactly what you will begin to see reflected back at you so you better make sure it's the one you want to see!

The above represents about one-half of my beginning workshop on Leadership. In the next essay, we will cover group dynamics, 'Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing' and the third will go into dealing with difficult people and situations.

The following are my sources and resources:

World Wide Web:

- Run Searches on Leadership, Leadership Development

Group Dynamics, Stages of Group Development

Books:

- Serving Humanity From the Writings of Alice Bailey (Lucis Publishing Co.)
- Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun By Wess Roberts, Ph.D
- The Art of Communicating By Bert Decker

• Personal Counseling By Richard Knowdell

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Continued From Page 2

We have left out the long list of ADF Groves simply because of space issues. Anyone who wants to see an updated list of all ADF Groves can go to the ADF website at www.adf.org. The Grove lists simply took up a lot of space. Instead of listing the Groves in every issue, it will be done once per year with the issue that comes out after the Annual Meeting. This way we can have the report from the annual meeting, and other organizational material all in one issue.

In this issue you will notice that a good part of the issue has been devoted to an interview I conducted with Gwynne Green,

Chief of the Bardic Guild. I wanted to make special mention that Gwynne helped out immensely with the success of this issue. She took time out of her schedule to chat with me on the phone. She also assisted in providing the Bardic material for this issue.

Oak Leaves 20 is dedicated to the Bardic Guild. Next issue, number 21, shall be dedicated to the ADF Clergy Council. What about issue 22? Not sure, but you can rest assured that issue 22 will be devoted to one of the guilds. I would encourage all ADF members to become active within a Guild.

— *Athanasios*

The Druid's Bookshelf

By John Michael Greer

Seeing the Forest for the Trees
a review of recent Ogham literature.

Steve Blamires, Celtic Tree Mysteries: Secrets of the Ogham (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1997); ISBN 1-56718-070-1, paperback, in print.

Glennie Kindred, The Tree Ogham (Sherwood, Nottingham: the author, 1997); ISBN 0-9532227-2-1, paperback booklet, in print.

Caitlin Matthews, Celtic Wisdom Sticks: An Ogam Oracle (London: Connections, 2001); ISBN 1-85906-053-6, boxed kit, in print.

Paul Rhys Mountfort, Ogam: The Celtic Oracle of the Trees (Rochester, VT: Destiny, 2002); ISBN 0-89281-919-7, paperback, in print.

Colin and Liz Murray, The Celtic Tree Oracle: A System of Divination (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1988); ISBN 0-312-02032-5, boxed kit, in print.

Nigel Pennick and Nigel Jackson, The Celtic Oracle (London: Aquarian, 1992); ISBN 1-85538-132-X, boxed kit, out of print.

Elizabeth Pepper, Celtic Tree Magic (Middletown, RI: Witches' Almanac, 1996); ISBN 1-881098-13-3, paperback booklet, in print.

Edred Thorsson, The Book of Ogham: The Celtic Tree Oracle (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1994); ISBN -087542-783-9, paperback, out of print.

Sometime around 300 CE, people in Ireland -- exactly which people and for what purpose is a matter of freewheeling scholarly debate these days -- began carving short messages on standing stones in an alphabet unlike any other, with letters made of one to five tally-marks and a strong symbolic connection to trees. Some three hundred fifty Ogham-carved stones survive, most of them in southern Ireland, the rest in Wales, the Isle of Man, and Scotland. By 700 CE Ogham had been replaced by the Latin alphabet in most of that territory, though the Picts of central and northern Scotland kept it in use, in their own enigmatic and half-decipherable language, for some two centuries longer. A few Irish manuscripts from the Middle Ages passed on the rudiments of Ogham lore, including a baffling array of cor-

respondences, ciphers, and poetic metaphors, and the alphabet and its symbolism remained a subject of bardic study as long as the traditional bardic academies of Ireland survived. Thereafter the Ogham alphabet and everything connected with it dropped into complete obscurity, until the British poet Robert Graves stumbled across it in eighteenth-century Irish histories. Graves combined the Ogham with his own idiosyncratic religious and sexual concerns, and used the resulting mix as a central theme in his 1948 book *The White Goddess*. The impact of this book, which played a potent role in defining the twentieth century Pagan revival, made an Ogham revival inevitable in turn.

Since that time the Ogham alphabet has found a place, or rather several different places, in modern Pagan traditions. Though its role in ancient Irish and Pictish cultures is anybody's guess, it has been widely defined as a secret script used by the Druids; although tree symbolism is only one part of the intricate structure of Ogham's poetic symbolism -- it

would be as historically valid to call it an ancient Druidic bird-alphabet -- its connection to trees has come to dominate discussions of Ogham in most of the Pagan and occult scene. Another of Graves' creative additions was the idea that the Ogham was the basis for an ancient Pagan calendar, and this has also become a durable part of modern Ogham lore. While Graves' Ogham tree-calendar works well as a system of sacred timekeeping, and has been borrowed by several successful calendars currently in print, it does not appear in any source from before his time; books that claim to have received material on the



Artwork by Kate Paddock

"ancient Druid tree calendar" from authentic third degree Druid grandmothers and the like should not, to put it charitably, be relied on for historical accuracy.

Central to most modern uses of Ogham, and almost as shallowly rooted in historical terms, is the art of divination. There is some traditional basis for Ogham divination -- the story of the wooing of Etain, a classic Irish legend written down in the ninth century, has a Druid divining the hiding place of the kidnapped Etain by means of pieces of yew wood carved with Ogham letters, and one of the old Irish Ogham tracts gives a method for divining the sex of an unborn child using the Ogham spelling of the mother's name. Still, scraps of information such as these may show that it's not unreasonable to use Ogham for divination, but they provide very little for the would-be diviner to go on, and the inspiration behind Ogham as a modern divination system has come largely from another source.

This is Ralph Blum's much-reviled and extremely profitable *Book of Runes* (1978), the opening salvo in the bombardment of divination kits that has so powerfully reshaped the habits of the modern occult scene in the last two decades. The furor launched (and the profits netted) by

Blum's kit revealed the existence of a substantial market for novel systems of divination, and sent writers and publishers alike scrambling for anything that looked enough like ancient wisdom to tempt the public. One result of this scramble has been the publication of a modest number of Ogham and Ogham-related books and kits. Though Ogham has attracted far less attention than the runes, and lags even further behind such enduring divinatory favorites as Tarot and astrology, it has become a noticeable presence in the magical book market, and new Ogham products have been appearing more rather than less frequently in recent years. If this trend continues, we may yet see pop figures embracing Ogham divination and Druid philosophy, along the same lines as Madonna's much-ballyhooed involvement with Qabalism. Before that happens, though, it's worth glancing over the books and kits that have appeared so far.

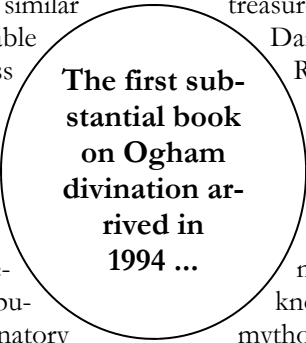
The first Ogham product to reach the market was Colin and Liz Murray's *The Celtic Tree Oracle: A System of Divination* (1988), based on a deck Murray had created some years earlier as the head of the Golden Section Order, a Druid organization in Britain with strong links to the older Druid Revival. In its published form,

the Oracle is a deck of cards illustrated by Vanessa Card, an accompanying book of interpretations, and a pad of forms for noting down readings, all contained in a wooden box. The 25 cards are attractively rendered in a Celtic style with plenty of interlaced knotwork, each card illustrated with an image of the appropriate tree and a sprinkling of additional symbolism. The book of 120 pages is a frustrating experience for the scholarly-minded, as it relies heavily on Robert Graves' theories and similar bits of questionable history; nonetheless its divinatory material is workable, and it gives several useful examples of readings with the Ogham cards. It remains the most popular version of divinatory Ogham on the market, and most other versions have borrowed extensively from it - though, curiously enough, it is the only work on the subject so far that treats the forfedha, the five extra signs appended to the 20 principal Ogham letters, as divinatory signs in their own right.

A second Ogham card deck appeared in 1992 from Nigel Pennick, a major figure in earth mysteries research in Britain, and the artist Nigel Jackson.

The Celtic Oracle was in some ways a more ambitious project, giving a much more substantial set of imagery and symbolism for each of the Ogham letters. To a noticeable extent, this additional material swamped the alphabet itself; thus the letter Luis, the rowan tree, becomes the Lady of the Unicorn, a complex symbolic image in which letter and tree alike play a small part. 20 cards represent the primary Ogham letters and there are also five additional cards, for the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danaan and the White Roebuck; this latter plays the same role as the Fool in the Tarot deck. Erudite and deeply influenced by Pennick's substantial knowledge of British mythology, The Celtic Oracle was a magical and divinatory success but never really a commercial one, and is unfortunately out of print at the present.

The first substantial book on Ogham divination arrived in 1994 from the durable Edred Thorsson (Steven Flowers), a dominant figure in the revival of Norse religion in the United States and the author of many books on the runes and related topics. The Book of Ogham is somewhat derivative from



The first substantial book on Ogham divination arrived in 1994 ...

these latter interests, but it has noticeable virtues of its own. Capably researched and documented, it covers the history of the Ogham alphabet and attempts to outline traditional Celtic cosmology, then goes on to provide a short but practical guide to each of the twenty primary letters as these relate to divination and Irish mythology. Thorsson's book is quick to dismiss material that cannot be documented in reliable historical sources, but equally quick to make creative use of what can be found in such sources. The result is a fully workable divination system with as good a claim to an ancient Celtic pedigree as any modern synthesis could have.

Those familiar with the complex history of American Druidry will note that Tadhg MacCrossan, an erstwhile ADF member and later founder of the short-lived Druid organization Druidactos, worked with Thorsson on this book. Like MacCrossan's own book on Druidry, and for similar reasons -- at least as much political as commercial -- Thorsson's book is now out of print.

1996 saw the publication of Elizabeth Pepper's booklet

Celtic Tree Magic, a brief discussion of tree folklore and mythology connected with the twenty primary Ogham letters. Another short work published the next year was Glennie Kindred's *The Tree Ogham*, calligraphied and beautifully illustrated by the author, a commentary on personal experiences with the Ogham trees and their indwelling spirits. Both of these booklets focus on the intuitive, emotional and esthetic dimensions of Ogham, and will provide plenty of annoyance to the scholar who wants documented sources and reasonable claims to historical authenticity. On their own terms, however, both have lessons to teach, and those who approach Ogham as a modern (rather than an ancient) tradition may find them useful.

A more substantial presence in the Ogham book market is Steve Blamires' *Celtic Tree Mysteries*, which appeared in 1997...

A more substantial presence in the Ogham book market is Steve Blamires' *Celtic Tree Mysteries*, which appeared in 1997 following two earlier books on Blamires' distinctive approach to Celtic Pagan spirituality. Unlike the books and kits covered already, Blamires' is not primarily about divination; in fact, it consigns that subject to a three-page appen-

dix. It also manages to avoid the hard division between scholarly and intuitive approaches, by taking a new route including elements of each. The focus of this book is experiential, and centers on attuning oneself with trees and gods using Ogham as a ritual and conceptual framework. After a discussion of the Ogham lore in the old Irish sources, the book goes on to discuss in detail the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of each tree, and presents a magical working to accompany each. The twenty trees associated with the principal Ogham letters are taken one at a time, in their traditional order, as a process of initiation into the secrets of the "Celtic Green World." Blamires' methods are fairly light on ritual formalities, and can readily be reworked to fit most Celtic or Druid magical systems. Celtic Tree Mysteries is a major contribution to magical Ogham studies and deserves a strong recommendation.

The divinatory dimension of Ogham was not to be neglected, though. 2001 brought a new kit from Caitlin Matthews, one of the most popular figures in the current Celtic scene and the creator of several Celtic-themed divination

decks. Celtic Wisdom Sticks are exactly what the title suggests, a burlap bag of wooden sticks marked with the twenty primary Ogham letters and their names, along with an extra stick marked with four of the additional letters or forfedha. The diviner draws one or more of the sticks, then tosses the extra stick to determine one of four meanings for the stick(s) drawn, which can be read out of the accompanying booklet. The result is a little like the I Ching, with all the advantages and disadvantages included in a text-based divination system. Matthews has a firm grasp of Ogham imagery and symbolism, and weaves a good deal of it into her interpretations. While it offers a workable method of divination, though, the Celtic Wisdom Sticks provide few options to those who wish to go further with Ogham. Quality control is also a little weak; kits often have "misspelled" sticks (too many or too few notches for the letter), and one kit purchased by a friend had two sticks with the same letter and none with another.

The latest entry into the Ogham field known to me is Paul Rhys Mountfort's 2002 work *Ogam: The Celtic Oracle of the Trees*. In many ways this is the practical handbook

of divination the subject has needed all along, solidly grounded in the traditional Ogham lore and the realities of divinatory practice alike. After a section discussing the history and mythology of the Ogham alphabet, Mountfort covers the twenty primary Ogham letters, giving for each a collection of traditional symbolism, a visualized image, a divinatory meaning, a description of the tree's natural characteristics, a discussion of traditional Celtic stories in which the tree in question is central, and references to magic and folklore connected to that tree. As with Pennick and Jackson's *Celtic Oracle*, which is echoed a number of times in this book, Mountfort also gives a divinatory role to the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danaan, though the White Roebuck failed to make it into his system. The third section of the book explains how to make a set of Ogham sticks, and provides five different reading patterns, each with a sample reading. A final section discusses some of the previous Ogham literature, exploring and critiquing other modern interpretations of the Ogham. All in all, the result is an eminently practical handbook of divination, which may well become standard in the modern Celtic scene.

The modern revival of the Ogham alphabet thus shares quite a few features with the broader field of Celtic Pagan tradition in its modern forms. The same squabbles between traditionalists who demand exact fidelity to historical sources, and intuitive practitioners who don't care where something comes from so long as it works, can be found in both. The roots of the trouble are the same in each case: the difficult, fragmentary, and often contradictory sources; the challenge of learning difficult and archaic Celtic languages, not to mention the equally difficult and archaic language of modern scholarship; the awkward clash between the ancient Celts as they actually were and the powerfully appealing vision of the ancient Celts as so many of us want them to have been - all of this guarantees that both Ogham and the broader Celtic field will remain fiercely contested territory into the foreseeable future.

Such quarrels are not out of keeping with the spirit of Celtic culture, which is, after all, not precisely known for its attitude of calm conformism! At the same time, the diverse, quarrelsome and creative scene that has emerged around the Ogham alphabet suggests that an authentic ferment is in

process, one with potentials that have not yet been tapped. Those interested in developments in the modern Celtic Pagan scene may thus be well advised to keep an eye on the old alphabet of the standing stones.

* * *

The Druid's Bookshelf reviews new and classic books of interest to members of ADF and other modern Druid traditions. Suggestions and submissions of books for review are always welcome! Please contact me (John Michael Greer) via ordinary mail at P.O. Box 95674, Seattle, WA 98145, or via email at threeynx@earthlink.net.

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FEAR ÚR, AND HOW HE GOT INTO THE CHURCH

*...with sincere gratitude to the Mummings of yore, yet without apology,
for they too made free with the mythic history of their ancestors.*

This story starts very long ago, my dear ones, *mo charaid*, in the time before any of us were even a gleam on a bubble breaching the surface of the primordial ooze. That ooze came about during the eons when Earth and Sun were arguing about who circled whom. The air was stinking with toxic ammonia; volcanoes vomited gouts of lava for miles and miles. Even when things cooled down a bit, the weather was a never-ending thunderstorm of such noise and violence even *Lugh Lamfadah* would have run for shelter. Yet at least that storm was something that Earth and Sun created together, and through it they learned they could perform wonderful and awful deeds, interweaving both of their magics. Together they stirred the vast cauldron of the ocean, spicing it with lightning bolts and minerals and salts. Though it was play to them, and brought them pleasure for the sake of pleasure, they knew that something was bound to come of it. When stuff stuck together into bits of red and blue and green, in tiny bubbles and capsules and boxes, Earth and Sun knew it was just the beginning. Even they could not have said the beginning of what, any more than most human lovers could say whom the unborn child they had just conceived would grow up to marry, even if they could look

directly at the DNA.

So, the little green and blue and red thingies learned how to turn sunlight into fuel for energy and growth. Then these thingies learned how to make more of themselves, while some other thingies learned how to get energy from eating still other thingies. But that's another story. For now we're following the green ones, the ones that learned how to clump together in teams, and grow different parts that did different things. Some of them washed up on the rocks and learned how to live there. After that there was no stopping the green. It covered the planet, floated in the seas, putting out tendrils, sending down roots, breaking rock and their own discarded bodies down into soil to grow more green, and more, and more, and more...

Earth and Sun were very pleased. Even planets, stars, and gods like to be surprised from time to time. But when all that green started talking to them, even they were astonished. They hadn't known they were creating a conscious being! A lot of the plants were clumping and working together just like the tiny green blue red thingies they had come from. No more aimless growing or floating around for them; they needed to

grow a mind. And that, mo charaid, is how *Fear Úr* came to be. It is fitting that the Gaelic word *Úr* means more than one thing. It means new, which is how it is most often used nowadays. It also means heather, or a kind of foresty green, and vitality, and renewal. It also puts one in mind of the noise some women make when they are being pleased, but that is probably coincidence. Best move on; *Fear* can mean a man, or mankind. *Fear Úr* then means, among other things, *Man Green*. In English, of course, we get it backward. Green Man. Since we don't know what his parents called him, that name will do.

As Fear Úr was getting his growth, those bits of thingies that had been eating other thingies were doing their own thing. By and by there were zooplankton, and mollusks and fish. Then they moved onto land there were more and more insects and reptiles and birds and mammals. Man Green was very interested in all this. He was very hospitable by nature, providing food and shelter and life energy for every creature that appeared. The creatures helped out by carrying around seed and pollen and leaving piles of manure to help the plants grow. Fear Úr suspected that sooner or later some weird animal was going to get together with other weird animals, figure out what they were, and who he was, and start talking to him. He was right. Those were the first people. Everybody got along just fine for millions and thousands of years.

Of course, trouble came along. A foreigner showed up, dressed in metal scales and carrying a long metal stick with a point on the end and an edge as sharp as a rat's tooth. No one knew enough to be scared of him, because anyone could see that under the scales he was a person, just like them. Yet he wasn't like them. People started asking him questions, and he started to answer. It would be a real long time before he stopped talking; he's probably talking yet. Compulsively rhyming. Badly. Here's how the first conversation went:

A brave child ventured forth...

"You're so big and strong and brave looking, Sir. Please, who are you?"

The knight replied,

"What? You've never heard of me? I'm Schism Sword, a sworded knight, The bravest champion known. I slaughter each heathen I fight, thus God's love is well shown."

The conversation continued.

"Don't you ever get scared and cry?"

"I can't be ruled by coward fears, n'or slow my blows for childish tears."

"What if you get hurt?"

"With God on my side I can't fail, my might's more than ten men. My sword's a razor shaves a trail round Earth and back again."

At that, one of the elders asked:

"Who is your God, sir? Please describe?"

"The only one, you scurvy tribe!"

"Of earth, or sky, or ocean deep?"

"You numskull! Are you quite asleep? You have an addled mind. God rules over the world, dost keep His home in heaven divine."

"Yes, gods above and gods below Holiness all around us. Their love's shown daily, this we know. Your fool's talk won't confound us!"

"Only a fool would call me fool, You vain, pagan old man! You'll need a better fighting tool than that staff in your hand!"

Now, people weren't entirely peaceful in those days, but these folk weren't particularly good at carnage. They'd been living by a simple understanding. Anybody who was too violent to put up with either got thrown out of human company, or was stoned to death. That might seem harsh, but there weren't as many people then as there were now, so they couldn't afford to tolerate a murderer or a bully. Schism Sword, of course, had been raised differently. What with his armor and his sword, he might have wiped out the whole tribe if Fear Úr hadn't stepped in.

The green god wore a shape pretty much like that of a man by that time; he noticed that seemed to help humans feel more comfort-

able around him than they did with some of his other appearances. The fact that he was green and covered in leaves should have alerted the knight, but either he was color blind, or lacked imagination, or both. They spoke for a while, but it's a chancy thing trying to imitate a god's voice, so I'll leave out the dialogue for now. The long and short of it is that Fear Úr gave Schism Sword a challenge like none he had ever faced before. He told the knight that there and then, he would kneel and stretch out his neck before the blade of the mortal, who would be allowed to strike three times with the sword, and take off the great green head. It seemed like a pretty good deal, but that was not all there was to it.

"Earth and Sun were very pleased. Even planets, stars, and gods like to be surprised from time to time."

After killing the god, Schism was to leave the land for one year, and come back on the exact day the beheading had occurred. The human was then to kneel and stretch his neck before the staff of the god, who would then strike three blows to knock his head off of his shoulders. If he followed these instructions exactly, Fear Úr would grant him a boon.

Sir Sword assumed he was dealing with an imbecile, and had no qualms taking advantage of the fool's bargain. He hacked off the green man's head and walked away, leaving it in the dirt. He never wondered why the people all around did not weep and wail at the defeat of their heathen hero. As

I said, he lacked imagination.

To his credit, that did not stop him from keeping his word scrupulously. Even though he thought his enemy dead, and helpless to enforce the terms of the bargain, he went away for one year, and came back on the very day he had left. Man Green was standing there waiting, his head firmly attached where it belonged. He stood three times the height of a man, no longer concerned with whether the knight felt comfortable or not.

Sir Schism Sword was a fool, to be sure, but no coward. Face white as the gills of a toadstool, he knelt before the giant. He steeled himself to die for his God above. He couldn't help but jerk, though, when the staff whistled past his ear and thudded into the ground, kicking clods of dirt to stain his face, which reddened as the giant taunted him, asking if that was how a soldier of the great Jehovah cowered before the countenance of Death. He vowed to keep his head still for the second blow, and that he did, but a whimper escaped his lips. The giant asked if he had soiled himself, and would like to clean up before he lost his head. The knight angrily bade him strike the final blow, and prepared himself once more for death. He did not know what to think when the great oak staff tapped him gently on the back of the neck, but remained silent, still as ice.

Laughing more kindly now, the god told Sir Schism to stand and ask his boon, since he had kept his

promise exactly, and would not die that day. Perhaps the world would be a better place today if Man Green had been less generous; we will never know. In any case, the knight asked for the right to build churches and shrines to his God throughout the land. The boon was granted with one condition. Carvings of Fear Úr's face were to be made part of every church, so that some day people would remember who was there first, and who their friend was. That is why many of the oldest churches still standing have smiling or frightful grimacing faces wrought in stone or wood, covered with leaves, foliage cascading out of mouths and ears. So that some day, dear ones, we will remember who our friend is.

And I promise every one of you, this story is as true as true can be, and who would know better than me? For I made it up myself.

~ *Wry Welwood*
January 18, 2003

(Author's note: As far as I know, there is no archaeological support for the existence of a pre-Church Celtic vegetative god, though anthropology might offer fertile ground for speculation. He exists, nonetheless. I've never dared ask him to produce his papers. ~WW, 22nd of February, 2003)

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